

## Rebecca Buck

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**From:** Connie Woodberry <cwoodberry@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 13, 2018 2:04 PM  
**To:** Theresa Utton; Rebecca Buck  
**Subject:** Written testimony against the \$4.3 million proposed budget cut in Developmental Services

Dear Theresa and Rebecca:

Below please find my testimony against the proposed \$4.3 million cut in Developmental Services in the Governor's budget.

My name is Constance Woodberry from Dummerston. My 38 year old son, Nathan, has a developmental disability and lives with a homeprovider in Brattleboro. He is supported by the Specialized Service Agency, Families First. I am a member of the State Program Standing Committee. Nathan has been employed for 17 years. He is involved in local theatre, music, art, and church programs. His life without the support that Families First gives him would be a very lonely unproductive life of pretty much sitting in front of a TV all day. The governor's proposed budget has a \$4.3 million reduction in the budget for Developmental Services. This would pretty much dismantle what is left of developmental services after the \$14+ million that have been cut out over the past 9 years.

When Brandon Training Center closed in 1993 Vermont was one of only two states where services to people with Development Disabilities went from an institution based system to supporting individuals and families in a community based system. It was a huge transition. Vermont did a great job. Vermont became a national model other states look to for effectively supporting people with developmental disabilities. Vermont is recognized nationally for 1). successful deinstitutionalization and transition to a community based model, 2). effectively supporting people with developmental disabilities to live integrated lives in the community, 3). the high rate of employment of people with developmental disabilities, and 4). **for cost effectiveness**. DAIL has also won international recognition for the excellent job it is doing in supportive employment for people with disabilities. Why are we tearing down a system that is successful, cost effective, supports vulnerable Vermonters, and is something Vermont should be proud of?

The budget cut of \$4.3 million proposed by Governor Scott will require dismantling the good qualities that are left in this system. Over the past 9 years there have been over \$14.1 million in cuts to Disability Services. Because of these huge cuts the Designated Agencies and the Division itself are already down to bare bones staff and activities. Here are some actions that have been taken because of the budget cuts over the past 9 years. In agencies there is high staff turnover because of the low wages. There are few if any substitutes. In some agencies one person provides day support for 2 or 3 people at the same time, and many direct care providers work on a contract basis without benefits. The support and monitoring from the DAIL has been cut back in order to meet these budget slashes. Although an increase in direct care staff wages to \$14/hour was approved through the workforce investment funds last year, this proposed cut would take away the possibility of implementing that increase.

My son Nathan was 3 months without a Direct Care Staff. The agency had no substitutes, no staff could be found to hire to work with him. This meant there was no one to accompany him to work, and he risked losing his job of 16 years. There was no one to take him to his therapy and community activities. His home provider took up some of the slack taking him to work or activities when she could, but this meant that she was working 24-7 and burning out, risking the possibility of having to find another home provider. Nathan became withdrawn.

The DS system **can not** stand this proposed cut and maintain the quality of services. It would require sacrificing the principles and cornerstone of the DS system.

I understand everyone has needed to sacrifice a bit to help balance the budget over the years, but Developmental Services have been hit extremely hard. It does not seem Vermont-like to be cutting deeply into supports for some of our most vulnerable people.

Thank you for reading this testimony. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Connie Woodberry