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## **FY 2018 Governor's Proposed Budget**

Hello. For those who don't know me, I am Max Barrows. I'm a person with Autism and I work for Green Mountain Self-Advocates. I receive Developmental Services. Thanks for the time to have me testify today.

We agree with the Governor's budget recommendation to add new caseload, roughly 8 million dollars for fiscal year 2018, to Developmental Services. Here is why it's important. The reason we need more funding for Developmental Services is because less than 30% of the people who are eligible for Developmental Services get any. Folks who are not receiving services rely on their families, partners and even themselves to work and live in our communities. The new caseload dollars are for people who for a variety of reasons go into crisis and need services paid for by the state.

- A person may lose a caregiver when their parents get too old to care of them and so they need services. Without services, they could die because they cannot take care of their basic needs.
- At times people with disabilities are abused and need a safe place to live. The Vera Institute of Justice reports that individuals with developmental disabilities, are up to 10 times more likely to experience sexual assault than other adults.

- Students with disabilities graduate from high school and need support to work.
- Someone who is already in services who gets sick will need more staff hours.
- A lot of things happen including people with disabilities getting in trouble with the law and they need supervision.

It is important for this committee to clearly know that the new caseload dollars are NOT to be used for Cost of Living Increases at the agency that they are going to meet an unmet need.

Let me give you an important example of why Developmental services are important. Roughly 40% of Vermonters with developmental disabilities have jobs and pay taxes. This is one of the highest rates of employment in the country. People see what we have to offer. It builds confidence to live more independently. When Developmental Services support people to work, it is a great investment because the more people work the less they rely on social security benefits. This is a win-win situation. The key is getting the accommodations we need to work and the support to work from trained job coaches. Vermont is leading the nation because the provider agencies excel at hiring and training a workforce that finds people with developmental disabilities jobs and supports them to stay employed.

But the system is under pressure. Some of the bigger agencies report that they may have as many as 80 staff positions open at time. A study done by the provider agencies reported that they averaged a 27% turnover rate over the past 3 years. Support staff are not paid a liveable wage. Often people with disabilities report high levels of stress due to frequent staff turnover. Just when you have an

excellent relationship with a support worker, they move to a job with higher pay. This deeply hurts and it sets us back. And bottom line is I won't be able to keep my job if I lose my job coach.

Of course, there are dozens of other reasons why a person with a developmental disability would face a life and death situation without services. Time does not allow me to elaborate on how essential residential supports are. People count on support workers to get them to medical appointments and more importantly carry out the directions of healthcare providers so they can stay healthy and save the system money in the long run.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.