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## **Vermont House and Senate Appropriations Committee - February 21, 2023**

My name is Max Barrows. I am the Outreach Director for Green Mountain Self-Advocates, a statewide disability rights organization. I am on the autism spectrum, and I receive Developmental Services.

Our disability community is asking for a 10% increase in funding for Developmental Services. The workforce crisis has hit us hard. For example, I have not had a job coach since April of 2022. My support person enjoyed working with me for more than 6 years, but he has children, and he could not afford to work with me anymore and went to a higher paying job. Now, I am very lucky to live with a supportive family. My Dad is a retired teacher, and he has been volunteering to support me so I can keep working successfully.

I am not the only one without support services. Today, 1 out of 4 support worker positions are vacant at Developmental Services agencies.

The system is under pressure. Often, people with disabilities report high levels of stress due to frequent staff turnover. Just when we have an excellent relationship with our support worker, they move to a job with higher pay. This deeply hurts and it sets us back.

Last year more than 33% of staff working with us left their jobs, and some agencies have vacancy rates as high as 50% to 60%.

Think of it as an investment in people with disabilities. Roughly 45% of people who get services are working and paying taxes. People see what we have to offer. It is a great investment because the more we work the less we rely on governmental benefits, such as Social Security.

This is a win-win situation.

Thank you for your attention to the services we deserve.

Sincerely,

Max Barrows

Outreach Director

Green Mountain Self-Advocates