

My name is Anastasia Douglas. I am a resident of Barre Town, a manager at Leonine FOCUS, the 50 state legislative tracking business at Leonine Public Affairs, and the mother of three children. Myles is 10 and has autism, Rose is 7 and has ADHD, and Elanore is 2 and involved in early intervention. My husband is a state employee who does release planning at the Chittenden Correctional Facility.

I am the current chair of the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council, the vice president of the Disability Rights Vermont Board, a member of the Barre Town Recreation Board and one of the original organizers of the Barre Pride celebration. My community is so important to me and I love having the opportunity to give back every chance I get.

In 2017 when Myles turned three he graduated from early intervention and the school system became responsible for his services. Up until that point Myles received speech at daycare or at home. Once he reached three I had to leave work once a week, pick him up from daycare, bring him to Barre City school to have speech in a closet because of a lack of space, drop him back off at daycare and return to work. A year later Myles participated in a trial extended day preschool at Barre Town. After seeing the the services provided were better we decided to move less than two miles, at a considerable cost, from Barre City to Barre Town so Myles could receive better services.

2017 seems to be repeating itself in our life. Elanore turns 3 in September and will leave early intervention and receive services through the school. I refer to this as the "cliff" which gives me

a lot of anxiety since it puts me in the position of balancing my job security and Elanore receiving her services. Before age 3, service providers travel where it is needed and work around the family's schedule. At this cliff, services require parents to bring the children to school at the service providers schedule, time off work and disruption of a three year old's schedule. Anyone that knows toddlers knows that schedules are important.

The other way 2017 is repeating itself is that we are facing a school budget crisis. Paraeducators and special education is one of the proposed cuts in our district. I won't allow my children to be put in a position where they don't receive the services they are entitled to. Since 2017 we've put down substantial roots in the community as I referenced in my introduction. However, if I find myself part of a community that does not support children's education and prioritizes test results over children's wellness, we will have to make some tough decisions.

At the council we talk about what our happy ending looks like. My happy ending would be providing children with early intervention services until they are in school full time and funding for schools so that parents like me don't live with the constant fear that special education services will be underfunded or cut in the next budget cycle.

Thank you for allowing me the time to testify. I am proud to be a part of the council and all of the great work they are doing and I hope that you will support the council this year by including people with disabilities in housing programs and supporting pay increases for service professionals.