

DECEMBER 6, 2016

A STATEMENT TO:

GOVERNOR DANIEL MALLOY
STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
OPTIONS UNLIMITED, BLOOMFIELD, CT
SENATOR MICHAEL DEMICO
SENATOR BETH BYE
MS. COLLEEN MCGILL, "OUR FAMILIES CAN'T WAIT"

ON BEHALF OF:

MR. ROBERT PETITTI, LEVERICH HOUSE, EAST HARTFORD, CT

Hi, my name is Jamie Whitman, and I would like to testify on what the DDS five year plan is lacking. Bobby Petitti is my cousin. He has been a resident of Leverich House, East Hartford, for approximately 3 years. He is 27 years-old but has the intellectual capacity, approximately, of a 7 year-old. For the past 3 years he has been receiving one-on-one care that has brought about the significant improvement of stability to his daily living which has substantially improved his quality of life.

However, in November Bobby received notice that continuation of his services is soon to be terminated. Not only is Bobby going to lose his one-on-one care, his funding is also going to be cut in half. In addition, he is now expected to obtain a job for a minimum of 30 hours/week. Bobby has a history, when feeling overwhelmed, of becoming violent, throwing punches, pushing, shoving, kicking, leading to the need for restraints and/or running away. It is self-defeating for the State to cut his services. Ultimately it will cost the State more money if they cut his services rather than keep them because Bobby will become, what we call in nursing, "a frequent flyer" in the emergency room. I know this because of his past history. If Bobby has a meltdown 20 times every month, at a minimum cost of \$5,000/ER visit, the State will be billed \$100,000 each month or \$1,200,000 in just one year. Without his one-on-one care, Bobby will revert to the scared, out-of-control, angry, frustrated, and violent person he was prior to receiving one-on-one care. The State has the obligation to keep Bobby safe. Instead he will become a danger to himself and others. Additionally, while Bobby is at the emergency room, his group home will be left short-staffed because staff will need to be with him at the ER.

How can it be that the people, especially DDS and DSS, the "experts", who exist to help and advocate for Bobby are the very ones sending him to his doom. Surely you know, in your heart of hearts, that if you cut Bobby's services, you are abandoning him and failing him miserably. THE MESSAGE YOU ARE SENDING IS THAT PEOPLE WHO ARE DEVELOPMENTALLY-CHALLENGED ARE EXPENDABLE.

I am a Registered Nurse. It never ceases to leave me dumbfounded when I hear that statement that "healthcare is no longer the service industry it used to be. It is a business". For the life of me I don't understand how business can be spoken in the same breath at those moments in healthcare when people are at their most vulnerable – sick, scared, alone, confused, and in pain.

Janet Storrs, Bobby's Mom, has been told that the reason Bobby is losing his services is because "he's doing so well". The State is not being honest here. These cuts in services have nothing to do with Bobby "doing so well" but instead has everything to do with State budget cuts and their push for privatization. The State wants to deceive us into thinking that these cuts and privatization are changes that will actually benefit our loved ones. DO NOT take us for fools. Clearly, if anyone should continue to receive state funding it is the developmentally-challenged. IT IS YOUR JOB TO FIGHT FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT FIGHT FOR THEMSELVES, NOT TURN YOUR BACK ON THEM. It is a shame that the very organization that families count on and trust to advocate for their loved ones is the same organization now pushing for these cuts. YOU FORGET THAT YOUR FIRST OBLIGATION IS TO THOSE WHO CANNOT FIGHT FOR THEMSELVES. Losing these services will be devastating for Bobby.

As a Registered Nurse, a large part of my job is health education, trying to get patients to understand the importance of staying on their medications. Patients often start off being compliant, taking their meds but then stop taking them. They tell me "but I feel so good. I don't need those meds any more". They miss the point completely that they feel better BECAUSE they are taking the meds. DDS and others are missing the same point here. Bobby is doing well BECAUSE he has his services. Take them away and he will crumble. Losing services will be very detrimental for him.

Know that we as Bobby's family are in this for the long haul. We will continue to fight to maintain his services. Please do not continue down this path of "doing less with more" and accepting Governor Malloy's "new economic reality" where the quality and amount of DDS services are going to be reduced for all of Connecticut's developmentally disabled. Please include advocating for more funding in the 5 year plan.

Thank you.

 Jamie Whitman, RN

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