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Subject: Input on DDS Draft
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I am commenting on the draft five year plan developed by the Department of Development Services. As suggested by the ARC Connecticut, I am giving personal insight into the specific real-life needs of an individual served by DDS. I am writing this with input from our forty-one year old daughter who continues to live with us in our home because she is dependent in all areas of care. She receives DDS Day Program Services and home supports from Community First Choice (DSS). She has rather unique needs with severe cerebral palsy which affects all four of her limbs and renders her non-verbal. Intellectually she is quite high functioning and relies on assistive technology to communicate. She has participated in three different day programs during her 22 years receiving DDS day services. There have been some incredible high points and also many days with boring, unchallenging activities. Sadly, she has continuously desired to do meaningful work and receive reasonable wages for all these years, but only has earned small amounts of money sporadically for the past few years. She only received \$300 last year in total for doing social media marketing via her head switch and personal computer. She is very social and highly motivated when activities are interesting. She has always been actively involved in various advocacy events until the pandemic which has greatly reduced her involvement. She has made several presentations for large state conferences, colleges, and local parent groups. She is well versed in the Charting the Life Course Framework and has co-presented with me praising its value. I am an ambassador trained in the first DDS class. Frankly, probably the main reason Carly has not been involved much lately in advocacy efforts is because she has seen little to no results of her efforts.

She (and we) realize she requires more assistance than the typical day program individual, but these needs are the same as when she was in school and was actively included in all academic classes except math. People with significant physical disabilities are overlooked for inclusion in many day programs and excluded from employment opportunities. Thankfully transition to adult life is much more focused on meeting the needs of students currently graduating, but such opportunities were not afforded to individuals twenty

years ago.

Our daughter has always been just a little bit too old for any new employment or educational initiative that would have been of interest to her and would have improved her skills. Honestly, forty is not an old age. She is nowhere close to retirement age. Actually, Carly is extremely energetic and looks and acts much younger than her chronological age. Most of her friends and personal care attendants are in their late twenties or early thirties and her interests are similar to theirs. She is still very eager to learn and improve her skills. She wants to be included in employment training opportunities.

We are very hopeful that Commissioner Scheff's plan will address the employment needs of men or women who may be older and have more complex needs. They deserve to feel a sense of accomplishment like everyone else does. I am very tired of looking at her disappointed face when I have to say she doesn't meet the criteria for some new exciting program. Our family is always available to discuss the tremendous, hopeful highs and depressing lows that she has experienced during her adult life. Thank you so much for your thoughtful concern.

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