

Hello committee members,

My name is Lydia Dennehy and I am here to share how Developmental Disability Services have helped my family. My son is now 12 and receiving a variety of supports. To understand what these supports mean to our family I need to take you back to when my son was younger and we did not have them.

In the summer before fourth grade I really started to feel trapped. My son was too big to just take places with me and now his crying and yelling in public couldn't just be passed off as "Ohh he needs a nap, or a snack, etc. He didn't want to go outside during the day because that meant sun screen, he didn't want to go to the library, or the grocery store, or the local park, every swim lesson was a struggle. When I was desperate to get out I would take him to the gym and let him sit and read in the play area, but I had to time it so that there weren't too many other kids there or he would be crying when I picked him up. My husband and I worried, would he ever be able to tie his shoes, or catch a ball, much less go to college or have a job and live on his own? I felt like a terrible parent when I got frustrated at him for making things hard ~~for me. Why is he doing this to me?~~ We knew we needed help and started on our path to an autism diagnosis and then to developmental disability services.

Now with services, we have a case worker. She has helped us make a plan and focus on doable goals for Aidin. We know that he will have support in reaching his long term goals and in living independently. I have gotten support as a parent in understanding autism and in getting through daily routines. Our case worker has helped us find and hire a personal service worker who helps Aidin plan activities and outings. We have help in planning for summer, and in paying for the swim lessons and clay classes that are so good for him. We now have OHP for Aidin and most of all, we have had a behavior support specialist come and observe him at home and school and help us make a plan. He is now going to all of his core classes and most of his elective classes. With encouragement we advocated for him and he is going to the right level of math class. We now have a system around screen time, showers, lunches, getting to school on time, bedtime routines, staying at home, and coming with mom.

Things are a lot more peaceful for us. ~~I am not panicking at the thought of my husband going overseas for a month because we did fine when he was gone for three weeks.~~ I have been able to work part time and serve on a state advisory board. And I am confident that if anything should happen to my husband and I in the future Aidin will have the supports that he needs. We think every child who needs them should have the supports that we have because DD services makes a world of difference to us. Thank you for your time and consideration.