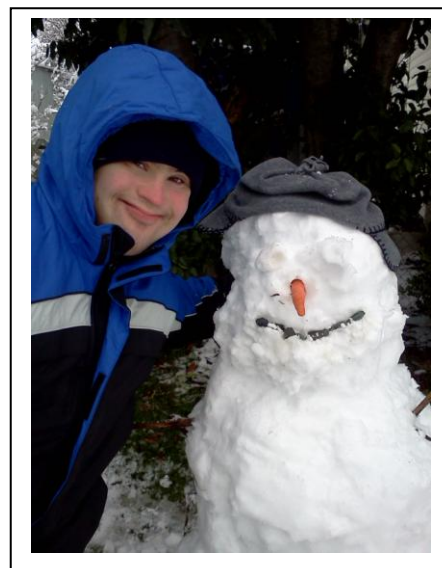


Dear Legislator,

Please do not cut services for our disabled adults. I am a single mom of Jayson and want to softly ask you to consider the concept of “loving your neighbor as yourself”. Not a sermon, just a principle of putting yourself in someone else’s shoes. Jayson is now 21 out of school come June, and all services from school are gone, but now instead of helping parents continue with providing for the disabled, parents are left with more hours in the day to provide a life for these adults with supports being cut. With 2 parents working in most households, there are not a lot of people around that will baby-sit Jayson so I can work, and even if I could, he can’t be left alone. At age 21, active in high school is he now to be housed with Senior Citizens? I need personal care hours to survive. All our schools promote the idea that all students should be able to be productive adults, so now do we just say well, let’s just forget about them. Jayson has worked hard for years to be as productive as he can for to be an adult who is proud of who he is and what he can do.



Remember the most vulnerable, remember that trauma to these sensitive adults will take years to undo. Think of the jobs he creates for others to have as their clients, whether it is DDD, DSHS, Doctors, Specialists, Washington Voc. Rehab, DVR, SSDI, Personal Care providers, teachers, teacher aides and on it goes..... I raised two other children by myself, one is a teacher one is a business administrator, both college graduates. I was 7 of eight children whose siblings have always paid their taxes as I have. My parents never went on assistance. I am not looking for a handout. Jayson needs to be home in a safe environment, not housed with people with severe problems, outbursts, tantrums and non verbal exchanges. Jayson needs a job with support until he can do it himself.

He brings joy and encouragement everywhere he goes. Because he keeps going, it encourages us all to keep going in these hard times. Do not traumatize him with a chaotic, dull environment. Would you like to be there? I have confidence that you care and will consider that people come first. We don’t all fit in the same box.

We need Medicaid Personal Care providers, Family Support, Respite, and Supported Employment. One out of 800 births result in babies with Down Syndrome. Has it affected your family yet? Thank you, thank you for all you do for most vulnerable!!

Sincerely,

Christine Bullock

Sedro Woolley, WA

To Whom It May Concern:

I am the parent of a young boy Stage who is 4 ½ years old. He was born with a severe seizure disorder which has left him unable to care for any of his own personal needs. Without one-on-one assistance from a parent/caregiver all aspects of survival and living would be impossible for him.

We are on the waiting list for waiver services which seems to be an endless line. We currently are receiving Medical Personal Care hours which allow for us to have a caregiver come into our home and help us meet his needs. This valuable service makes it possible for me to maintain my home, nurture and spend quality time with my daughter. It also allows my son to have independence of his parents and frankly gives him valuable one on one time that we simply cannot provide on a daily basis because his care alone requires so much attention and time. We were able to qualify for this service because my husband was out of work. Now that he is reentering the work force our income will change and because of proposed cuts to Basic Health we will no longer have this service.

The waiver would allow for us to continue with this level of care for our child and would be less of a cost to our state as it is supplemented by federal dollars. I plea with you as a constituent in your district to fully fund this service! It is impossible to imagine a life with our son without this kind of support. It unfortunately makes placing him out of home sometime in the future as he ages and becomes more difficult to care for, a really disturbing and depressing realistic future for us. Not because we don't have the heart or drive to care for him, but because there will become a time that without support we will not be able to provide the level of care he will need. I shutter at the grimness of my reality.

Imagine if your only hope for help with your child was a nursing home? Finding out your child has a life long disability that has no cure is devastating enough, but knowing there is no support from your community is destructive to the institution of our marriage, family and overall quality of life.

I thank you for your service, time and consideration!

Sincerely,

Jessie Atkins

Marysville, WA



Stage Atkins, age 4 ½ years

February 15, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Andrea Weymiller. My husband and I have a daughter with Down syndrome, developmental disabilities, and a myriad of health conditions. For the short 5 years that she has been alive, we have struggled on a daily basis with her special needs, her poor health, and her feeding issues. If it weren't for all of the support that I have received from Pierce County's Parent to Parent program, I don't know how I would have fared. I have a complete network of mothers from my Down syndrome Support Group that I can call on any time of day or night for questions, concerns, or needs. The Parent to Parent program of Pierce County is responsible for supporting this group of mother's and helping us coordinate and facilitate our monthly meetings.

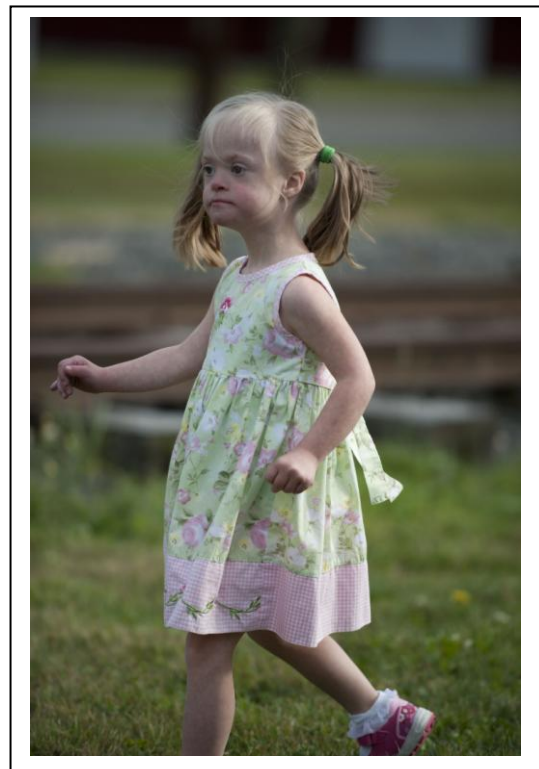
I also have found support from PC2 and PAVE. They continuously update me with Legislative issues. It is comforting to know that they are just a phone call away to answer any of the questions that I may have regarding our daughter's well-being and her future. The educational classes that are put on by the above mentioned programs are invaluable to us. We greatly benefited from and IEP 101 class that we took when our daughter transitioned from the Birth to 3 Program into the public school system.

Please put yourself in our shoes when you consider cutting Community Services like Parent to Parent. We parents of children with disabilities are often afraid of the future of our precious children, and what it holds. It is imperative that we have a resource to continue to help and support us as we raise our children. Please think of what your life would be like if you were completely responsible for a person who could not care for themselves. Think of how fearful you might be if all services were cut out of your support network, and you were left with nowhere to turn. Please put yourself in the shoes of our children. They need us, they need our Community Services, and they need you.

Thank you for listening.

Andrea and Paul Weymiller

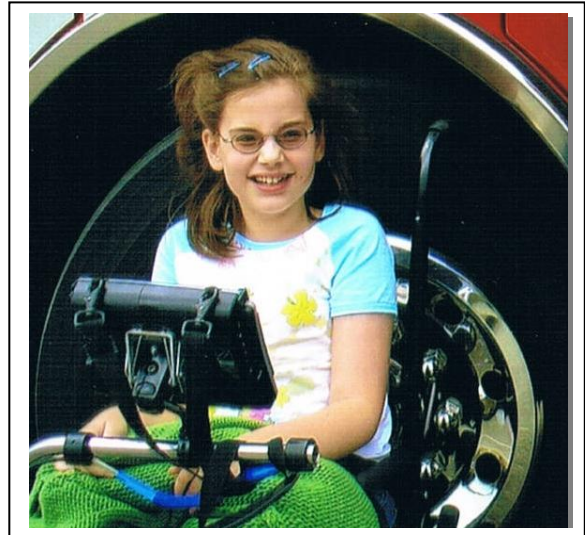
Parents of Mary Grace
Buckley, WA



Peter is an independent man from Mount Vernon with a strong sense of pride and purpose. He was born with cerebral palsy and his parents were given the option of placing him in an institution. They chose community instead. Peter is a College graduate and a trained Para-legal. He has been waiting for services for years. A little bit of help would go a long way to supporting Peter towards achieving his dream of full-time employment and economic self-sufficiency.

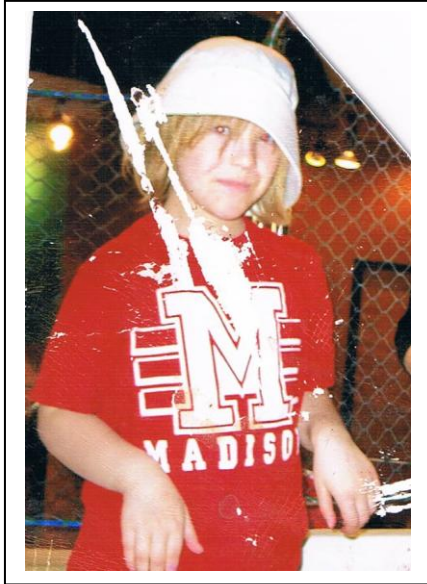


Rhyann is my twelve year old daughter with Joubert's syndrome from Mount Vernon, WA. (She has been assessed as eligible to receive services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities and qualifies for an RHC yet she receives NO paid services.) Her dad & I do it all. When her big sister is home from college she helps too. She attends her local elementary school in an inclusive setting though she



requires 24 hour nursing level of care and supervision. She is completely dependent on others for everything. She uses a Dynavox communication device attached to her wheelchair. We have been waiting for personal care, respite services, and family support for Rhyann for years. How long must we wait before we go into crisis for lack of help?!!

(Mom – R.M.)



Tamara is a 9 year old girl from Burlington, WA. She has velo-cardio-fascial syndrome. She needs moderate to intensive support with personal care and requires constant supervision. Our family needs respite and family support to cope and keep Tamara in our home. We are STILL WAITING! (Mom – J.D.)

CJ was diagnosed with ASD when he was 2. Thanks to Birth to Three we received some services. When he turned 3, we were transferred to DDD. I received a letter and a questionnaire, then another letter that said we weren't eligible for services.

I'm a widow and an orphan with no family in town, save for my children. I am on Survivor benefits from SSI due to the death of my husband 2 years ago. His family does not help me either. I have no respite care, no personal care, no case management, no services at all. I cannot get a job because I cannot afford daycare for my son. And I cannot pay for daycare because I don't have a job.

Because my son (requires) "eyes on" 24/7, the only time I don't have to be watching him is when he is in school. He attends the autism preschool through Tacoma Public Schools M-F 9 AM to 130 PM. This is the ONLY therapy and assistance he gets and the only break I get.

I've talked to so many agencies who say I'm not being treated fairly, but I don't have the time or energy to battle DDD. I don't have time to get a shower most days, or do laundry or dishes. They say that once he hits 6, we can apply for SSI disability for him, but what if that is less money than we get in Survivor benefits? I can't make the bills now, and I can't afford to lose money.

If you want more details about my story, how we've slipped through every crack, and how I stay locked in a bedroom with my son 24/7 because no one will help me out, feel free to call. 253-495-3710. Leave a message and I'll call you back.

Tasha Gibbs

Mom to CJ Gibbs

My daughter is 8 years old & autistic. She has been on the wait list for DDD services for 4 years. She has not received any services from DDD because the wait list is so long. I have been struggling to pay out of pockets from my private insurance a lot.

Tam Dang (mother)

My name is Jacque Bridge and I have a story to tell you about my daughter. On 1-2-03, January 2nd 2003, Olivia Joy was born with Down syndrome.

She didn't want to suck so we forced milk into her mouth with a tube and then forced her to swallow by expressing the milk into her mouth, enough went in to make her live. Livies' pediatrician was so supportive and encouraging searching any answers I asked.

When Livie was about three months old we had our first visit from a SPARC/Occupational Therapist she started working with her right in our home, this worked out so well as she has 5 siblings three of which upon her arrival where five, three and two years old making it almost impossible to get therapy out in a facility.

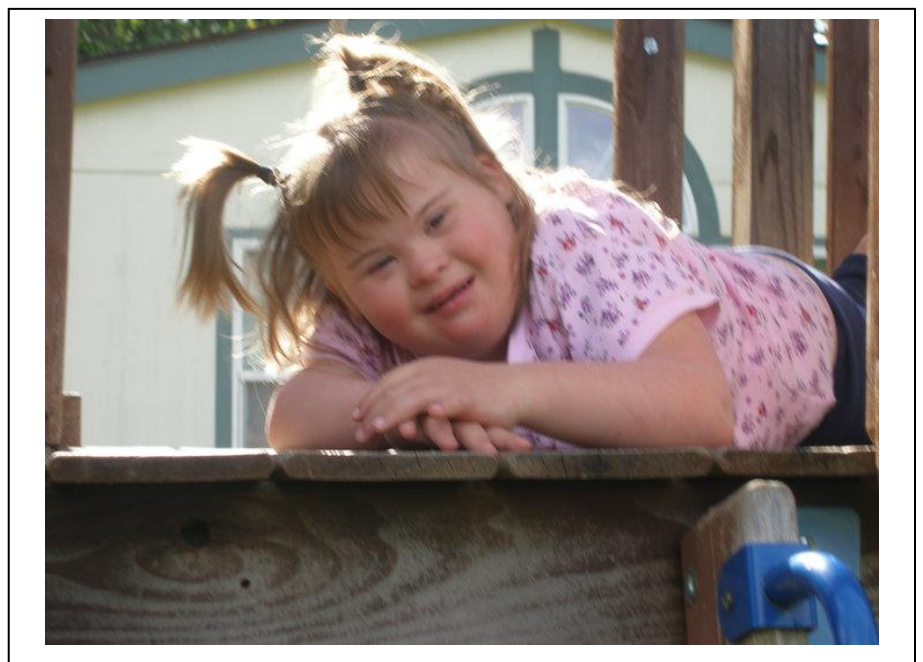
Every week Shaun came into our home teaching us just how to accomplish Olivia's unique development. Being the youngest of six you would have thought us to be experts at child development, not so, it only helped us realize the way we took for granted typical development and just how easy it is for them.

Every little accomplishment through intervention Livie made where huge successes, eating, sitting up, walking, talking.

Shaun taught us about muscle tone, trunk support, and language skills by introducing tools and showing exercises to do with Livie. Facilitated us with the IFSP's IEP's and technical paper work that needed to be recorded. So much information needed, we had never done before.

Olivia then started into an inclusion classroom SPARC/EHS when she was two and a half years old. She attended this school two years. She received speech, occupational and physical therapy right in the classroom routine.

Olivia then attended another inclusion classroom locally in our district of typical developing and IEP kids for her next two years where she had speech and physical therapy twice each week of the four days she attended.



Olivia started signing words with her hands and sat on her own at eighteen months, walked at two and three quarter years, Olivia verbally said mom for the first time at four and dad at four and a half.

Olivia is in a special education classroom presently doing a second year at kindergarten level with inclusion in the typical classroom approx. two hours a day, she receives speech and occupational therapy in her special education classroom. Olivia uses an augmentive device and sign language for most of her language skills, with a few audible words.

Olivia has been in private speech since she was two and a half years and physical therapy since she was four and a half years.

Although she has made huge strides since birth, her skills are still developing. The expertise of speech, occupational and physical therapy has and will contribute to increased abilities.

I am not sure where her development would be today without these support services.

Olivia is a fun, lovable, smart, beautiful little seven year old girl; she overcomes challenges every day of her life.

I know the admiration, acceptance, inclusion and awareness in our own immediate family and the community she is involved in, but I am ever grateful for the support at your level. I am also grateful for the services Olivia has received thus far.

I believe with continued speech, occupational and physical therapy in school and privately she will gain the skills to be a successful adult with many abilities. If these services are no longer available to her, I would have to wonder about full potential as an adult.

Reprioritize the budget to protect and maintain these critical and essential services and thank you for your ongoing support.

Jacque Bridge
Concrete, WA

Dear Legislator,

My son has Classic Autism and Seizure Disorder. He is non-verbal and needs 24/7 line-of-sight-supervision to be kept safe. He is taller and heavier than me and I'm not getting any younger. This constant vigilance is exhausting. He has been on the wait list for Waiver Services since he was 4 years old - he is now 14.

When the IFSP was created, we were thrilled. We could use the money for respite (yeah!), co-pays for medications and neurology appointments, therapies and his health insurance payments. Now it's all gone.

For those families on IFSP's, respite (most especially) is a service necessary to keep the sanity of primary care providers. We need regular breaks to keep ourselves healthy and able to do the job we have been given - taking care of our children with disabilities in the best way we know how, in our homes (and out of institutions).

I understand that there is a budget crisis that must be addressed, but completely eliminating the IFSP is not the way to do it.

Also, please support the Parent to Parent programs. With other services being cut back or eliminated, there will be an ever increasing need for this support program to help parents find natural supports and local services in their hometowns.

Sincerely,

Michelle Williams
Ellensburg, WA
Kittitas County

Hi,

My son is 11 and has Down syndrome. He is charming and wonderful and is impulsive and has poor judgment, requiring constant supervision. He has medical conditions which take us to dr.'s locally and in Seattle on average 20 times a year.

I'd love to send you a pair of my old shoes, but we just moved and don't have any at the moment. We are so thankful our husband/father/provider could find a job with better benefits and pay, although we are sad to say this is why we had to leave the community in which we and our children had lived in for 11 years. We felt we had no choice but to move because of the poor state of health insurance and the lack of state funding to help our family with expenses related to disability. Our prior public employer had shifted the burden of health insurance premiums to our family so our health insurance premiums alone were 25% of our gross pay. Yet, our family could not qualify for any program to help pay for medical care. Paying 25% of our gross pay, plus the unreimbursed medical expenses, was still cheaper for us than going without insurance or paying for insurance with less coverage.

On top of that, the State "suspended" the IFSP funding which we used for respite, unreimbursed medical expenses and other disability-related expenses. That \$6,000 was critical to our family, even though we only had it for a few years. So we made the move. We have better salary and benefits, all of which will help our family maintain for now. We will be repeatedly grateful for our better medical insurance coverage.

We will private pay for respite, if we can find someone. Of course, since we're not using state funding, we can't even access the state's Individual Provider lists to help locate a care provider. Some might say this is the way it should be: we have taken the steps to be able to provide for our family without relying on public funding. And we have. And we will for as long as we can. But I would like to say.....walk a mile in my shoes...

Sincerely,

Laura Brackett

Sequim, WA, formerly of Coupeville, WA

Blair is 20 yrs old and has developmental disabilities, seizures and several other health related issues since birth. Unfortunately, we didn't see/realize all of her "issues" or know the extent of her disabilities until middle school when her neurologist finally suggested that she undergo some neuropsychological testing. We had spent all of her grade school years trying to figure out why she wasn't physically and socially keeping up with her peers. As we later learned, she wasn't capable of it and was going to require "special education". When I first contacted DDD (when she was in middle school) I was told that she may or may not qualify and that "they didn't have any money anyway so there was probably no point in applying". I was so overwhelmed with supporting her on a day to day basis that I didn't even bother to apply for DDD assistance for her. I'm so sorry now that I didn't know better or didn't have better advisors.

I finally applied for DDD help when Blair was almost out of high school. By then I had learned a lot from other parents and knew I was seriously behind the curve with this. Blair went through the assessment and I asked to have her on the waiver database and be considered for MPC. The Case Manager assigned to us was very new and extremely overwhelmed with her case load and the short story is she got on the database but nothing happened with the MPC. After months went by I inquired again and again and was finally assigned a new Case Manager who came out and did the MPC assessment. She was finally approved for MPC after the age of 18! My husband and I had been paying out of pocket for caregivers for years and I had to cut my work hours back to help support Blair. Finally we were thrilled to get the MPC assistance.

In the Fall of 2010, the last year of her "Transition Program", Blair got a part-time job, with the wonderful help of her employment vendor, Provail. She is working 15 hours/week at a church daycare and is doing extremely well. Her employer is very supportive and understanding of her disabilities and health issues and it's a wonderful situation for her. I recently emailed her new Case Manager (it's frustrating that Case Managers are always being reassigned) about the possibility of getting long-term job support help for Blair, but it doesn't look like there will be any funding for her for this, so we will have to pay out of our own pockets again to help Blair. My husband was almost laid off a month ago and expects that his job will be going away in about a year. I'm working part-time hours now to support Blair but certainly don't make enough to support the whole family.

We deeply appreciate the help we have been given with supporting Blair and are looking forward to the day when the budget will allow greater support.

Thankfully,

Gail & Chuck Buchanan

Parents of an awesome young working woman named Blair Buchanan

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Lisa Wolfenbarger and I am associated with the Arc because I am caring for a nephew that has been diagnosed with Autism. Shawn has never been on any state paid programs for treatment. He has always been on a waiting list. I interrupted my college career to help out and while living with him and his family, in order to help out, I studied behavioral therapy techniques from the internet. Shawn lives with me now. I have a knack for teaching and Shawn, I think, is turning out okay. He will always have some communication issues that I am sure could have been avoided by early intervention. He is entering transition programs and I have concerns about cuts to these programs and to programs that will help him find and keep a job, but all in all we are doing alright. I have a job that pays the bills, and Shawn has good health insurance.

So when we were asked to write to you about our stories I really didn't know what to say. Could we use more help? Yes. Are we going to be financially crippled, homeless or forced to put loved ones and/or children in institutions or group homes, as many in the state will, because of these cuts? No. But I have something to say about these cuts anyway...I would like you to raise my taxes.

I grew up in an Ultra-conservative, ultra-Christian and very republican home. I was taught to embrace all the values involved and grew up whole heartedly believing in them. I am still Christian; however, if the contents of my last ballot are ever made public there are family members who probably will never speak to me again. I have found it to be in conflict with my Christian values to put the ideas of a free market system above the commandments to love my neighbor and to care for the those in need. I realize that the idea of capitalism is that the rich will take care of the poor, but clearly that hasn't happened. I realize as well that the biggest reason that many people do not believe in social programs is because some people take advantage of those programs.

Some people shoplift and the stores still remain open. It's the cost of doing business. Some people drink and drive and kill other people. We all still drive; it's the cost of getting to leave our homes. Some people will take advantage of the Red Cross, United Way, Salvation Army or other charities I still give to; it's the cost being a good human being. Some people will always take advantage of social programs yet I voted Democrat straight down the list this last election. But it was the cost of doing what I could to keep social programs and health care reform in place. It was the cost of being a good Christian and following the Lord's commandment to love my neighbor, which is after all one of the two great commandments. The Lord didn't say just to love and care for the ones who will never take advantage of us, and he certainly didn't tell us that we could care for no one at all because some of the people who got help wouldn't deserve or need it. I don't want to be the kind of person who is so arrogant or self conscience that I let my values be dictated by the fear of being ripped off or taken advantage of. So please, raise my taxes, use them to help support those who desperately need help. I know some knucklehead will find a way to get his or her hands on some of the money, but I refuse to live my life in fear of knuckleheads. I refuse to turn my backs on people who desperately need and deserve my help because my hatred or fear of some people is greater than my compassion for others. Please do everything you can to support the programs that support our State's most vulnerable.

I don't think that many of you see these issues as I do, but I thought you might be interested in the views of someone who has switched parties over the issues you are discussing right now. I really do believe that 99% of you are doing what you believe to be the best for our state (even if you don't agree with me) and I want to thank you for your service and best efforts in this time of financial crisis. I also want to thank you for listening to us and reading these letters. Good luck in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Lisa Wolfenbarger

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21st District

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