

Testimony of James Turner, Director of Communications, Horizons, Incorporated, South Windham CT regarding the Republican /Finance and Revenue Bonding Committee's proposed tax package.

My name is James Turner, and I am the Communications Director at Horizons -- a private nonprofit agency located in South Windham. For 36 years Horizons has provided individualized supports and services for people with special needs where they live, learn, work, and play. Horizons is a member of the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits.

I am here today to respond to Senate and House Republicans regarding the proposed state budget.

On behalf of the 1500 individual Connecticut citizens who benefit from the supports provided by Horizons, I want to express my appreciation for your support of the needs of people with developmental disabilities and other special needs. Thank you for including the restoration of DDS cuts in your proposed budget. I speak for them in saying it is gratifying and validating to see our elected leadership come together to recognize the crucial importance of state funding to their quality of life.

Restoring the funding to Department of Developmental Services is, simply, essential to these individuals and to their families. They are citizens, voters, and taxpayers whose lives are in many ways in the hands of the budget-makers here at the Capitol. The Governor's proposed cuts to DDS are unacceptable. There is no funding for high school graduates to make the transition to adult life and employment. No funding to place individuals into appropriate residential settings. This and other funding must be restored in the final budget.

The people on whose behalf I appear before you don't care if it's a Republican budget or a Democrat budget. They are not experts on state revenue. Nor am I. I simply urge the parties (Republican and Democrat legislators and the Governor) to come together and respond to the needs of these people whom we care about.

Thank you for your support.