

Thursday, January 22, 2009

20
EXHIBIT ~~1/22/09~~
DATE 1/22/09
NO 2

Good morning Chairman Henry and members of the Committee, and happy Thursday. For the record my name is Tina Owen and I reside at 143 New Meadows Drive in Missoula. My husband and I have a son, Carter Owen. He is 11 years old and was diagnosed with High Functioning Autism at the age of 5. Carter is an adorable, lovable kid and we love him immensely and would do anything for him.

6 years ago we were blessed to get introduced to The Child Development Center in Missoula and with the help, love, and experience from our Family Support Specialist, and a long term employee, she fought and advocated for Carter and got him a Medicaid ~~Intensive~~ ^{slot} Wavier, which we are so grateful for. For about 4 years Carter did wonderful and she was enormously helpful with Carter and us teaching us how to cope with his awful disorder. In addition, she and Carter had built a great relationship.

Child Development Center has had numerous employee turnovers because they cannot afford to pay a competitive wage for the great people that are out there that do extremely well in helping children and parents muddle through our lives with these awful disorders.

As a result of this, about a year ago our wonderful Family Support Specialist left Child Development Center, we have missed her dearly. Since then we have had three Family Support Specialists and Carter has had about 4 Hab Aids. This makes it very hard for Carter to build a relationship, a level of trust and a rapport with people when the consistency is not there and so many people are coming in and out of his life. Carter has literally gone for months without a hab aid because no one was applying for work at CDC. Therefore Carter came to a standstill in his development and progress.

Carter is also one of the unlucky kiddos with Autism that has acquired stomach problems and has been diagnosed with Ulcerative Colitis. His father and I strongly believe that this is a result of stress in Carter's life. If any of you know anything about Ulcerative Colitis; Symptoms are stomach cramps, loss of appetite, constant bloody diareaha and malnutrition. This is a dreadful medical condition for anyone to go thru especially an 11 year old in addition to Autism.

This is a serious matter and my husband and I deeply encourage everyone on the committee to take this into consideration and keep our Respite flexible. Let the parents keep their say on who the loving people with skills and specific training should be to spend time with their child and how much they can pay them. Please trust the parents in making the decision regarding their children.

Please support an ^{RATE} increased budget for the ~~Child Development~~ ~~program.~~ ^{ON CHILDRENS DD SERVICES}

I would like to thank the committee for funding the services that my son, Carter receives and continue to do so. It has a made a world of difference in his life, and that is what we as parents want for our kiddos is for our kids can grow up to become the best adults that they can be.

This has been a great experience and opportunity to come to Helena and speak to you. I hope and look forward to coming again.

Thank you.