

PRESENTATION TO FAMILY ADVOCACY BROOKLYN LEGISLATIVE MEETING

Parent Testimony, Reashelle Banister

March 13, 2015

Hello I'm Reashelle Banister. I am a single mother of a one year old daughter. I work as a direct support professional at one of Heaven's Hands Community Services Day Service Hab programs. I've been with HHCS for 3 years.

I am incredibly passionate about what I do and I enjoy working with people with developmental disabilities each day. I grew up in this field as both of my parents work with individuals with developmental disabilities and have continued to do so for the past 30 years. Growing up, I saw the passion that my parents had in supporting the lives of people with developmental disabilities. They would come home each night and tell inspiring stories related to helping individuals; it was clearly apparent to me that they both loved what they did for a living. From a young age, I knew that I wanted to follow in my parents' footsteps and be able to give back to people with developmental disabilities.

That being said, I have to work two jobs, both for agencies that provide support for individuals with developmental disabilities, just to make ends meet. I work 7 days a week to try to make enough money to cover the basic living expenses for my daughter and I. As a result, I do not get to spend much time with her.

As a direct support professional, I am able to assist individuals with developmental disabilities live the lives they choose to live. I'm able to help them become more independent, use their communities and develop meaningful relationships with those around them. I also assist new staff in joining the Day Hab team and help train them so that they can also be an asset to the individuals we serve. From there, I also work part time for another agency as a community habilitation specialist. While doing

Community Hab work, I am able to provide support to my individuals while in their home, while at work and while out in the community. I work as an advocate for the individuals in helping them to best express their needs wants and concerns in an effort to craft individualized supports, achievable goals all based on outcomes that are meaningful.

I am also a full time student pursuing a bachelor's degree in Cognitive Studies. My motivation to continue my education is because I want to continue my career in the field of Developmental Disabilities, even one day reaching a management level position. I know it's not an easy job, but I know it will be a job that I will love.

Overall, I can say with pride, that I love helping to support the dreams and lives of people with developmental disabilities. There is no greater achievement than being able to help an individual find their productive or social niche in the community or reach an individualized goal. It brings real purpose to my life; I feel like I'm truly making a difference in people's lives.

Unfortunately, I am concerned that I won't be able to continue to work with people with developmental disabilities, and that I won't be able to continue to give back and make a difference in their lives. If I can't earn an income sufficient to support my family and meet the basic necessities of life, I will have no other choice but to move on from this beloved career choice to pursue a job that will better meet the needs of my family.

To my legislators; in the final hours of your decision making process, please do not forget the needful work of the direct support professionals. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.