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Testimony to Maryland State Senate Budget & Tax Committee
Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BRFA) of 2025
February 28, 2025

Re: Opposition to the elimination of Low-Intensity Support Services from the Developmental Disabilities Administration

I'd like to take a moment to tell you about my son, Daniel, whom Senator Guzzone may remember from our meeting in October 2022. Daniel is a joyful kindergartener who loves octopuses, Mickey Mouse, playground swings, and his little sister Ingrid. He also has Down Syndrome.

Having a child with a lifelong disability is both emotionally and financially draining. Like everyone else today, we face rising costs of living: gas prices, food expenses, and insurance premiums, but we also bear the extra costs of specialized care for Daniel: doctor's appointments, therapy sessions, and special equipment for everyday tasks.

My family is fortunate enough that I have been able to be primarily a stay-at-home parent, but I have always planned to return to work once my youngest was in school. However, as that time nears, I don't see how I can work full time and still manage Daniel's medical and therapy appointments. The reality is, I am being forced to choose between taking Daniel to his appointments or being able to pay for them.

Thankfully, the LISS grant has been a lifeline for us. Daniel has been selected twice, out of seven or eight applications. These are just some of the ways the grant money, a total of less than \$4,000 over two fiscal years, have helped my family:

- Medical bills my insurance company denied our claims for - \$650.
- Medical expenses not covered by our insurance company - \$652.
- Swimming lessons, because drowning is a leading cause of accidental death among disabled children - \$350.
- Eyeglasses – one pair of glasses - \$406.
- A bicycle for \$180, plus an additional \$208 for the adaptive equipment to make it usable for Daniel.
- Special education advocacy training, to ensure Daniel gets the most out of his school experience - \$297

While the grants have been a small part of the state budget, the impact on our lives has been immeasurable. They've provided financial relief, but more importantly, peace of mind and the ability to give Daniel opportunities to be a kid.

As you consider the future of the LISS program, I ask you to remember that the emotional impact of these grants—reducing stress, ensuring safety, and helping Daniel thrive—cannot be measured in dollars and cents. These are the real gifts a grant gives to families like mine. This is what families like mine, and children like Daniel lose if the program goes away.

Thank you for your time.