

We are parents caring for a son with autism, and our caregiving responsibilities are constant and demanding. He requires daily supervision, support with emotional regulation, help navigating routines, and ongoing advocacy to ensure his needs are met at home, at school, and in the community. There is very little flexibility, and caregiving does not pause.

Our family also has a second son with autism, who previously received services before eventually being approved for DDA services. During that time, respite care was essential support that allowed us to manage the needs of both children. Caring for two children with autism places tremendous emotional, physical, and financial strain on a family, even when one child later transitions to another program.

Respite care has been one of the few supports that allow us to continue caregiving safely and sustainably. It gives us time to rest, attend to our own medical needs, manage stress, and prevent burnout. When we are supported, we are better able to care for our son and maintain a stable, supportive home environment.

Each year, we run out of respite hours before the end of the fiscal year. Even at the current level, the hours do not stretch far enough to provide consistent support throughout twelve months. We are forced to ration time and often go long periods with no respite at all.

Reducing respite care hours would make it extremely difficult to manage our caregiving **responsibilities**. A reduction would increase stress, limit our ability to plan, and remove critical support during times when our family needs it most. For families like ours, respite care is not a luxury, it is a necessity that allows us to continue caring for our child at home.

We ask that decisionmakers recognize the realities faced by families caring for children with autism and understand that reducing respite hours will have serious and lasting consequences for caregiver well-being and family stability.

Thank you for your time and for considering the real impact these decisions have on families like ours.

Respectfully,