



Connections

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Protect Maryland's Disability Services

Budget Cuts Put Safety Net at Risk for Most Vulnerable

Joan Plotkin keeps active with weekly art classes and gym workouts to keep her mind and body strong. She's proud of the home she shares with Jubilee friends. Her close relationship with sister Marilyn is treasured.

Joan's direct support professional staff help her maintain her vibrant life as she gets older. After two hip replacements and chemotherapy, Joan needs more help than she used to. Her team truly helps keep Joan steady on her feet.

"Imagine our surprise when we learned that Joan's dedicated one-on-one service hours were not reapproved," said Jubilee's Dominique Clark. She is at the hub of Jubilee's work to ensure that people we support maintain their Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) approved services.

"We were very concerned," said Dominique. "Would Joan's support that she needs for safety have to change? Would her choices and independence be compromised?"

We knew one thing: Jubilee was going to fight for Joan. Joan's biggest champion, Marilyn, advocated for her too.

"The health, safety, and quality of life of the people who rely on Jubilee are our top priority," said Executive Director Steve Keener.

Finally, when all seemed lost, we got good news. Joan's dedicated one-on-one support hours were reinstated.



Joan Plotkin (teal hat) joins advocates from Jubilee to make their voices heard in Annapolis.

Now, just one year later, Joan is back at square one fighting to keep her dedicated service hours.

Without dedicated one-on-one support staff, Joan is at a greater risk of falling and getting hurt. She might not get to go to the activities that keep her engaged and happy.

Sadly, this issue is much larger than Joan. Looming budget cuts to DDA services will make matters even worse. **Proposed budget cuts to DDA total more than \$300 million for disability services**—including dedicated service hours. Those cuts will hurt 43 percent of the people Jubilee supports. The budget also puts a cap on people's disability service budgets, which hurts people with complex medical needs.

Together, these two budget items are estimated to slash at least two million dollars from Jubilee's budget. Providing pro bono disability services at that magnitude is not possible for Jubilee.

Maryland lawmakers are in session now and will decide DDA's budget. Jubilee is working closely with DDA and elected officials. It's critical they protect DDA funding for community providers of disability services. ●



Joan's home is brightly decorated with paintings she creates at her weekly art class.

MEET

Joan Plotkin

Speaking Out for What's Right

I've always been outspoken. Back when I was a little girl growing up in California people would bully me. My mom always advocated for me, and I learned to speak up for myself.

Sometimes it feels that people with developmental disabilities are looked at like we're a bother. Or worse, that we don't exist. Well, we do exist. We want the same good life as everyone else. It's important to speak out.

I moved to Maryland to be closer to my sister Marilyn. For 21 years Jubilee's been helping me out. A while back I served as president of Jubilee's Client Council. That made me the voice of the clients to Jubilee leadership. Just this past year I graduated from The Arc's Partners in Policymaking class. It's a big deal. I attended classes all year and did a project on helping people deal with bullies. Now I'm officially an advocate! **I tell our legislators don't forget people with disabilities. The disability community needs the budget money. Funding disability services helps people like me have our own place to live and do things we like.** My weekly art and fitness classes are a big part of my life. It's important we have nice places to live and people helping us who are kind. I have that with Jubilee. **After I talked with the officials in Annapolis, I felt good inside. I knew I did something important to help people.** ●

Add Your Voice!

Help protect DDA funding for community providers of disability services.

Contact your Maryland elected officials at the statehouse and tell them to protect dedicated hours for people like Joan in DDA's budget.



Kitty O'Connell (pictured, right) trusts Jubilee staff like Suzanne Williams for support for daily living. **Watch Kitty talk about advocating for the disability community!**



Fairly funding community providers means that: Our direct support professionals get paid a living wage. This keeps Jubilee competitive in the frontline labor shortage crisis. People Jubilee supports form long-term relationships with highly trained staff. Budget cuts put those relationships at risk. Turnover is stressful for the people we support, and expensive for the organization.