

Patient Portfolio: **Ryan Kim: A Critical Need for Continued DDA-SDS Support**

DDA-SDS-Parent Providers

HB1053

Hearing Date: Wednesday, March 5, 2025 - 1:00 PM

Name: **Ryan Kim**, a current member of KADPA (Korean American Disabled People's Association)

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Age: 26 years old

Gender: Male

Mental Age: 3-5 years old

Communication: Non-verbal

Diagnosis: Autism with severe behavioral challenges

Interests and Comforts: Despite his challenges, Ryan finds comfort in music, attending a Catholic church, and interacting with Catholic priests. He also enjoys eating Korean Food like Kimchi, which brings him joy and familiarity in his daily routine. These simple but meaningful preferences contribute to his emotional well-being.

Behavioral and Emotional Challenges:

- Self-harm and aggression toward others through hitting, scratching, and biting.
- Non-verbal and emotionally sensitive, making communication and adaptation to new environments extremely difficult.
- Requires constant supervision to ensure his safety and the safety of those around him.
- Ryan's fear of unfamiliar people and places has historically made it nearly impossible to hire caregivers outside of his immediate family. His family observed that being in the care of non-family members heightened his anxiety and worsened his behavioral issues. His mother even doubted that any non-family member could manage his needs effectively for more than a few hours.

Impact of the DDA-SDS Program:

- Since joining the Self-Directed Services (SDS) program, Ryan has received personalized care from people who understand his needs and provide a stable, supportive environment. This consistency has significantly reduced his behavioral issues, allowing for better emotional regulation and discipline. His sensitivity to new experiences has improved, and most importantly, he now often expresses that he is happy.
- The SDS program has not only transformed Ryan's life but has also brought stability to his family. His well-being and the overall quality of life for his household have greatly improved because of this program's structure and support.

The Consequences of Budget Cuts:

If the SDS budget is reduced, Ryan and his family will face severe setbacks:

- **Loss of Care Stability:** The reduced budget will make it impossible to retain personal caregivers, forcing Ryan into care arrangements that are unsuitable for his needs. His history suggests that traditional care models will not be able to effectively manage his behavioral challenges.
- **Increased Fear and Regression:** Any transition to an unfamiliar setting or group-based activities will likely trigger severe distress, reversing years of progress and increasing his self-harm and aggression.
- **Limited Community Engagement:** Ryan cannot take public transportation without his family members. If he is forced into traditional care models, he will lose access to the limited community activities he currently enjoys.
- **Family Hardship:** Without SDS support, Ryan's family will struggle to meet his needs, jeopardizing both his well-being and their own stability.

A Call to Action:

- Ryan, despite his challenges, has the right to a fulfilling and dignified life. The DDA-SDS program has provided him with the care, structure, and supervision necessary for his well-being. Cutting this budget would strip away his progress and leave him and his family in an untenable situation.
- We urge policymakers to recognize the irreplaceable role that SDS plays in the lives of individuals like Ryan and to protect its funding. Ryan's happiness and stability depend on it.