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How many of you are parents? Can you remember the joy you felt as your child hit the developmental target skills for her or his age? Remember when your child was finally old enough and responsible enough to stay at home, alone, while you ran errands, met friends for dinner, or went to see a movie? Remember that first quick weekend trip you took, totally spur of the moment, you got a call, saw a travel opportunity, quickly threw the necessities in a bag and just went because the kids were old enough to go it alone for two days? Remember sending them off to college and being in the throws of empty nest syndrome? Remember realizing that as empty nesters you now had the freedom to pretty much come and go as you pleased? Remember that medical emergency and the comfort you felt knowing that you at least would get financial help from your insurance? If you have young children many of these things may be unfulfilled experiences or dreams of the future but they are still viable. Now imagine, as a parent, your child and family being denied many, or all of these, simple milestones and these dreams being shattered.

If you are going to reform Medicaid do so in a manner that provides more service slots, service providers, and funds to make the system work in a timely and efficient manner. My son, Scooter, qualifies for the CLASS program. My family is fortunate. This program has provided respite care, attendant care, therapy, transportation, home modifications, and technological supports to allow him access and inclusion in his community. That's the good news. The bad news is that there are thousands of people on the waiting list for CLASS and other such programs who, along with their families, are struggling to keep life and family in some semblance of order and sanity.

Expand the programs and funding to provide more venues for young adults to live, work, play, and contribute in their respective communities.

The status quo has been years and years of waiting on a list or lists hoping that some slot would open. I have parented for 22 years. My son is at the age that most of his peers have already moved out, graduated from college, had their hearts broken and mended, started a career, accomplished many of the milestones of the adult world.

Scooter ages out of the public school system next week. Our family is about to enter a new arena of life, an arena where Medicare offers few and limited options. We are not alone or unique. Across the state and nation other families will be crossing this same threshold of uncertainty. Reforms must be made to replace the uncertainty with viable, accessible, programs to provide vocational, residential, recreational, psychological, medical, and spiritual support for young adults with mental and physical disabilities in their communities. Don't reform Medicaid for political expedience, instead, reform for consumer expedience. Let my son, my family and others like we are reach life's milestones and live out life's simple dreams.

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