



WISCONSIN BOARD FOR PEOPLE  
WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



My name is Ben Gapinski and I am a high school senior. I have autism and have had an Individual Education Plan since I was 3 years old. There are a lot of possible cuts coming up in the federal budget and this concerns me and my family. I am worried about cuts to the Department of Education because I know how important it is to have the right support at school. I have been included in my classes with the support I need. I have made lots of friends. I was on the cross country and volleyball teams; I am running track this season. I also created a sign language club. Don't tell the little kids this secret; I am the school mascot at my high school. It is fun when they come up to get pictures with me.

I have Medicaid through the Katie Beckett Program and I also have Children's Long-term Support Waiver Services. With these Medicaid supports in place I have been able to go to the gym and get fit, learn a martial art, have medication I need to focus, and support from doctors. In the past I got therapies through Medicaid at home and at school. I am worried about cuts to Medicaid for my future because I may need help with living skills in an apartment and on the job. I am excited to get my first job this summer after graduation. I am planning to go to technical college in the Fall and become a certified Yoga Instructor.

I have a lot of opportunities because I work hard and have the support I need. Everyone deserves positive encouragement and support toward success. I learned about advocacy from my parents and at school. Last year I participated in BPDD's Youth Leadership Forum where I learned how the government works and how to speak up to your legislators about what matters in your life. I recently spoke at a townhall meeting to share my story with legislators and ask them to make no cuts to Medicaid and to protect the Department of Education. Speaking up made me feel powerful and hearing others speak up, made me feel less alone. We need to keep striving for inclusion.