

**Ohio Senate Finance and Financial Institutions Committee**

**May 21, 2009**

**Bethany Wilson**

Good morning Chairman Carey, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the Senate Finance and Financial Institutions Committee. My name is Bethany Wilson and I am a parent of a child who was in the Help Me Grow program in Belpre. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

In December of 2000, I was an overjoyed first time mom of a lovely and healthy baby boy. While in the hospital, I was approached by the nurse and asked if I would like to receive services with the Help Me Grow program. As a first time mother, I thought that any extra help that I could receive in making sure that my child was okay would be a large blessing. Little did I know how right I was.

Darian, my oldest child, started out normally enough except for a few problems with colic. By 12 months, however, he started to show developmental delays in gross motor skills, speech, and also in areas of eating. My service coordinator, Terri McGoye, noticed the problems right away and began working with me immediately on finding someone to help us with these delays. We started out with getting the opinion of an Occupational Therapist out of Marietta Memorial Hospital. Amy Westbrook noticed the problems and documented them as well. She stated that my son had what is known as Sensory Integration Dysfunction. She explained to us that without the early detection of the problem it could lead to severe problems as he grew older. For those who do not know what SID is, it is a neurological disorder causing difficulties with [processing information](#) from the five senses ([vision](#), [auditory](#), [touch](#), [olfaction](#), and [taste](#)), the sense of movement ([vestibular system](#)), and/or the positional sense (proprioception). For those with SID, sensory information is [sensed](#), but [perceived](#) abnormally. Unlike [blindness](#) or [deafness](#), sensory information is received by people with SID; the difference is that information is processed by the brain in an unusual way that may cause distress or confusion. In layman's terms, it meant that Darian was unable to eat like a normal child would because the texture's caused him to throw up, loud noises sounded 10 times louder to him than a normal child, and jumping, skipping, running, and riding a bike caused him severe distress because he was unable to deal with being off balance. Through Help Me Grow, I was able to determine the problems early and was able to receive the help that was needed for Darian to learn how to deal with his sensitivities and live as normal as a life as possible for someone with his condition.

Terri McGoye also helped me with Darian's speech delay. She referred us to a speech therapist at Marietta Memorial Hospital who began working with Darian at around 2 years of age to help him speak better and begin to catch up with where he should be. The therapist also recognized that there was a few problems with his hearing which sent us to see an Ears, Nose, and Throat physician who has to remove his adnoids and put tubes in his ears. Not only were they causing problems with chronic ear infections, but the adnoids, which were a 95% blockage, were also causing him to be unable to hear soft-sounded words and letters. With the speech therapist and the Ear, Nose, and Throat physician's expert help, Darian was speaking at a much better level and

improving as every day went on. Without Help Me Grow, I would have never realized at such a young age that the slow progression of my son's speech was a problem and then he would be so far behind in schooling that it would be impossible for him to proceed through the grades as he should.

Before the age of 3, a child who is still showing signs of needing early intervention, a service coordinator will recommend an early intervention preschool program. My service coordinator helped us with the process to get Darian into a program that would help him not only with socialization, but also would supply him with learning opportunities that would prepare him to enter into Kindergarten on time and with the skills that he would need throughout the rest of his educational career.

Because of Help Me Grow, Darian has been able to receive early intervention services that allowed him to learn to deal with his condition and has allowed him to make marked improvement in every area. Darian is still working on catching up to his peers in areas of language development, reading, and socialization, but the gap is closing and closing fast. This year, when working on Darian's IEP for his next school year, I was given the happy news that Darian is no longer in need of Occupational Therapy services, because there is no longer anything for them to work on with him. He has reached all of his goals and mastered them. If not for the Help Me Grow program, he would have never been able to make it into Kindergarten on time, let alone continue through the grades with grade level work being completed appropriately.

Due to the wonderful success and the tremendous amount of help that I received through Help Me Grow with Darian, I have enrolled my second child in the program as well. Even though I know the warning signs for the problems that my first child had, every child is different and deserves to be treated as such. Ezekiel, my second child, may have problems that my first did not and then I would be looking for the wrong sets of problems. No matter who you are, you should be able to receive the help needed to make sure that your child has the best possible start from day one. Please realize that this program is an essential program for parents, especially first-time parents, so that they are able to make sure that their child/children are able to reach their developmental milestones and stay happy and healthy throughout their life. I ask you to consider what I have said here today and remember my son Darian while making your decision to cut funding or the Help Me Grow program completely. This service is a necessity to make sure that all children get the best start possible, which in turn will help our state and our country's future.