It started as a class project to find out about how people could influence public policy, but became something more for Sara Jastrebski. It became a chance to make a difference in the life of her brother.

"I love my brother," said Jastrebski, 17, a junior at Cab Calloway School of the Arts in Wilmington and brother to Marc, 20, who was born with Down syndrome. "I've seen all the hardships he's faced."

As part of her civics class this year, Jastrebski suggested the students look into how the government could help people with disabilities find jobs. She knew her own brother was going through a job search, so it seemed an easy enough project. When she learned there was not much available in the way of job help for the disabled in Delaware, Jastrebski decided a class project wasn’t enough.

She made an appointment to speak to the Joint Finance Committee at Legislative Hall in Dover.

"Having [Marc] for a brother has changed my whole outlook on life," said Jastrebski.

Her projects in the past have included helping with the Special Olympics, and organizing a group of friends to educate people on how hurtful the word "retarded" can be, but this was the first time she took on a public role on her own.

She said she wasn’t asking for a handout for her brother, just a chance for him and others like him to learn a little independence. She spoke of the pride her brother would reap if he became employed and how it actually would cost the state less to help him get a job than to support him at home. She thought it would be a wise expenditure.

"I learned that [the General Assembly] spent something like $30 million to buy golf courses, when they could have put more money toward job programs," said Jastrebski, referring to the state's purchase of Garrison's Lake Golf Club south of Smyrna in 2008.

She spoke before the legislative committee, members of the state Division of Health and Human Services, her family and members of her civics class, who traveled to Legislative Hall as part of a field trip to support her.
BY KIM HOEY • SPECIAL TO THE NEWS JOURNAL • APRIL 8, 2010

Sara Jastrebski (second from right) spoke to the Joint Finance Committee about her brother, Marc (left). (Courtesy of Deborah Jastrebski)

Related Topics
- Places - Smyrna, DE, Wilmington, DE

More Health headlines
- Bedbugs draining patience (3)
- FDA reviews antiseptic chemical widely used in soap (2)