

**Testimony for the Human Services Committee on March 8, 2007 regarding
Raised Bill 7279: An Act Concerning the Money Follows the person Program**

Good Morning members of the Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today. My name is Candace Low. I am Executive Director of Independence Unlimited, a Center for Independent Living located in Hartford. I am here today in support of Raised Bill 7279: An Act Concerning the Administration of the Money Follows the Person Program.

For the past five years, as subcontractor of the CT Association of Centers for Independent Living Nursing Facilities Transition Project (NFTP), my Center has been one of five CT Centers for Independent Living (CILs) leading the change in the way we perceive and treat people with disabilities. This award winning project was instrumental in helping the State comply with the Supreme Court's Olmstead Decision and provides the foundation for Money Follows the Person Program. The Nursing Facilities Transition Project was a systems change project that removed barriers for people with disabilities so they can leave institutions and live in a community of their choice. Our approach to transitioning people with disabilities is based on the independent living philosophy of consumer control and consumer choice. People with disabilities can make choices about their own lives such as where they want to live and what they want to do in the community just as everyone else does. Most people with disabilities don't choose to live in institutions; they are forced to live there because of the lack of accessibility in the community and lack of community supports. The Nursing Facilities transition Project began tearing down barriers to community inclusion and today 150 people with severe disabilities have transitioned from nursing facilities into the community. The average age of the individuals who have transitioned is 52. The projected savings to the State of Connecticut is approximately \$4 million dollars. The Centers for Independent Living have waiting lists of many more individuals with disabilities who want to live in and be active participants of the community.

Many years ago when I was a teen, I received a brain injury from an automobile accident. After leaving the hospital, I was sent to a nursing facility because there were no community supports to help me or my family care for me. I feel very fortunate that my Dad did not think I belonged there and worked diligently so I could go home. The process was very difficult for my family but my life as an active member of the community has been so much more enriched than when I was in the nursing facility. Today, I am a Mom, the Director of a non-profit organization, a community volunteer, advocate, musician, artist and poet. I can give back to the community in which I live and work. For most of us, going to an institution is a one way street unless someone makes it possible for us to leave. Today, you can be that someone....

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