

Bill # 7279

Good morning Members of the Committee

My name is Gabrielle Kitchener. I have psychiatric and physical disabilities.

I work at the Disability Resource Center which provides such services as teaching independent living skills, and transitioning people from nursing homes to the community, among many other services. I come before you today to advocate for the "money follows the person" program, especially as it relates to the Centers for Independent Living.

I think many people with disabilities could benefit from the "money follows the person" program, especially people with cognitive and psychiatric disabilities who are not currently covered by the Personal Care Assistance Waiver. Also, people who are in nursing homes and who don't have the financial resources to live in the community would benefit from the "money follows the person" program.

I myself could benefit from this program. I currently receive Medicaid, which pays for a large portion of my home health care. Without my home health care, I would be in a nursing home which is much more costly to the state. My home health aides get me out of bed in the morning, wash me, clothe me, and toilet me. They assist me with my routine of physical therapy exercises.

They assist me with putting on my night gown and putting me to bed. I'm in danger of losing Medicaid because of a possible spend down. This means I'm in danger of going to a nursing home. However, with the "money follows the person" program, I could live in the community and not have to worry about spend downs. I would receive home health care in my own home.

The "money follows the person" program should be guided by independent living principles. People with disabilities should have choices in their services, they should control their services, and they should be as independent as possible with skills such as budgeting, making phone calls and finding personal care assistance.

The Centers for Independent Living would make excellent vehicles for administration of the "money follows the person" program because they already have a nursing home transition program and they teach independent living skills.

I ask you to support generously the "money follows the person" program.

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