

Testimony of Judith Shaw Before the Human Services Committee

Supporting SB 562, An Act Concerning Increased Access to the Medicaid Program for the Medically Needy Elderly and Disabled

March 4, 2008

I am writing about the Medicaid spend-down on a personal level. The facts are "out there" though nearly incomprehensible to those not immersed in Medicaid Advocacy.

The spend down, which must be met to receive Medicaid coverage from the Department of Social Services (DSS), is an unwieldy, difficult obstacle for those of us in recovery from a mental illness and/or substance abuse, people with physical disabilities, and older people. These folks are facing an overwhelmingly difficult time in understanding, accessing and receiving the services they need. We need healthcare, psychiatric care, medications, perhaps home health aides and transportation to medical appointments.

Even professionals cannot adequately advocate for us because they often do not understand spend down policies. Some consumers know this first hand from getting conflicting and inaccurate intervention from their state workers who aren't always properly informed about spend down. Our population is suffering from this confusion. Many of us are on Social Security, SSD and Medicare. Our incomes are often below poverty level. We are fighting for our survival and while some of us have been improving, many are losing ground.

We have found in talking to many people in the community who are trying to "beat" the spend down, that they do not know where to turn. In fact, people in need are not knocking on doors or coming out of the woodwork because they just don't know how to say what is happening to them in terms of the Medicaid spend down.

This is a major healthcare crisis for us. We frequently cannot get adequate, timely or appropriate medical care. Low income people who are unable to meet the spend down are now receiving bills or are not getting crucial services as people did before Medicare Part D was enacted.