

Testimony before the Human Services Committee

HB 6610

March 3, 2009

Good morning. My name is Ray Veazie and I am from Norwich, CT. I am here today to testify about the effect of the Medicaid spend down on my healthcare.

I struggled to learn in school and in the community as a child and young adult. When I was 19, I was in a motorcycle accident resulting in traumatic brain injury. After rehabilitation, I always worked a full-time job and paid into the social security system which I expected to be there when I needed it. I have always had good jobs. It took me longer to learn than most people, but once I learned the job I had it down to a science. My last job involved making airplane engine parts which I did until I couldn't work any longer – I could no longer lift the heavy parts as required by the job. Since then I have been unable to find a job.

I currently receive \$1,025.00 per month in Social Security Disability. After paying all of my monthly bills which includes rent, utilities, car insurance, car taxes, gas, and car maintenance, I have approximately \$200.00 to get through the month. With this \$200.00 I need to buy food. I receive Food Stamp assistance, but this only covers 2/3 of my monthly food needs. I also need to purchase toiletries, clothes, and other necessities.

Every six month, I am subjected to a "spend down" because I am determined to have too much income (\$1,025.00 per month). My "spend down" is \$2,000.00. This means I need to come up with \$2,000.00 worth of medical bills in order to have Medicaid insurance. My monthly medication costs \$708.00. I am unable to get my medication when I am on a spend down. I do have Medicare Part D, but the medications I need are not on the approved list. I have tried other medications that are on the list, but they do not work for me. My doctor gives me samples, but they only last a few days. My doctor has tried various programs to get discounted medications from the pharmaceutical companies without success. What's the point of going through all that treatment only to end up back at square one because I cannot afford the medication I need. Before I got into treatment, I self-medicated with drugs and alcohol which led to crime which led to jail and thoughts of suicide. I don't wish that on my worst enemy. I don't want to go down that road again.

When I go without my medications, my comprehension and mood are greatly affected. I also have traumatic brain injury and am supposed to take anti-seizure medications, but have had the same problems with access. I have had seizures which is life-threatening and scary. I know that there are many other people going through this terrible situation too. I am unable to go to any doctor appointments. I can't afford to pay for my medications and still meet all of my monthly basic needs. I also can't live the life I want without the medications and medical care that I need. I have given up trying. I think things are just going to get worse. In fear of not knowing what tomorrow will bring, what will people do? I see this happening in other countries and now I see it getting worse here. I see a lot of people I know give up. They end up turning to drugs and alcohol. All the money I paid into the system for years – where is it? Where did it go?

Thank you for listening.