

My name is Ellen DeLuca and I reside in Waterbury. I'm here today to speak out against the proposed budget cuts to the Centers for Independent Living in the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services budget.

The Centers provide a lot of very important services for people with disabilities like me. After spending eleven years in a nursing home with no hope of a better life I met a transition coordinator with a program called Money Follows the Person thru my local Independence Living Center. After a couple of meetings I found I was eligible for this program and was soon making plans to transition out to the community. With all the help and very structured support system I made a smooth transition and I have been in the community for over two years now. I am also seeking to go to college to get a degree in human services so I can give back to the community.

When I think of how much good the Independent Living Center has done for me and how much it can continue to do for others it upsets me deeply to know that these services are in jeopardy of being cut or total lost due to the cuts that are being proposed. Why leave people who can make a contribution to society in a nursing home to stagnate. We need to keep these programs alive like Money Follows the Person and continue to transition those out of nursing homes who can be at home and want to be at home with family and friends.

These proposed cuts to the Centers for Independent Living would disrupt Money Follows the Person and shatter the emerging aging and disability resource centers in Ct.

If I were in a nursing home waiting to transition out into the community under Money Follows the Person and I was told that "Sorry, but due to the budget cuts the local office of Independent Living Centers has had to shut its doors". The news would be absolutely devastating to me. Possibly effecting in a way that could be physically or mentally damaging. Is this what we want to have happen to the many clients who have something to offer out in the community? Let's save the Medicare and Medicaid dollars for the acutely ill who really need it.

Thank you very much for your time. I'm open to any questions you might have that I can answer.