

Testimony

2/17/12

Bob Gorman

Independence Northwest

My name is Bob Gorman. I live in Torrington and I am employed as an independent living advocate at Independence Northwest, in Naugatuck. We are an Independent Living Center that advocates and provides direct services for all individuals who have a disability. We are one of five Independent Living Centers in CT. I am here today asking that you restore our full funding of \$665,927 per year for all five centers combined.

I have been with the Center since 1998 when I lost my vision from complications due to diabetes. At the time I went blind I did not know where my life would lead me and how I would be able to support my family. Independence Northwest provided me with an opportunity and fourteen years later I have been fortunate to assist other individuals with disabilities to remain independent and live in the community.

Over the past year I have assisted a recent amputee who had not been able to leave the bedroom in her home for 18 months because her bedroom and bathroom are on the second floor. Our agency secured financing for a stair lift and she was able to celebrate Christmas downstairs this past year. We also assisted a father whose 20 yr old daughter was on a heart valve pump machine awaiting a heart transplant. He owned a small business and was paying over \$20,000 a year for his daughter to be on his health plan. We were able to enroll his daughter in a Medicare Advantage Plan at a cost of \$120 a month, a very significant savings. We also advocated for a 29 yr old visually impaired college student who was having difficulty with the school because the assisted technology that she needs was not working in the study lab. This was quickly resolved.

Prior to losing my vision I was employed in financial field for over 20yrs. They say that you need to invest money in order to make money. The same philosophy holds true in a similar for the State of Connecticut. If you provide full funding to the Independent Living Centers the State will save a significant amount of money. All five Centers participate in the Money Follows the Person program. This program transitions individuals who are on Medicaid and living in nursing homes to live in the community. As of July 1, 2011, the average cost of a person living in a nursing home was \$127,032 per year. This program alone saves the State millions of dollars of Medicaid costs. We need for you to fully fund the Independent Living Centers as this money supports the infrastructure of not only Money Follows the Person but the ADRC, Youth Transitions, Veterans Outreach and a transitional housing program for individuals living with HIV and AIDS. It also supports the CORE services of the Centers which are Advocacy, Peer Mentoring, Information and Referrals, Independent living skills and other disability related services that allow a person to remain independent. The State of Connecticut

funding is critical for us, we all have very small but extremely dedicated staff that earn low salaries however our true rewards are achieved through the hundreds of individuals living with disabilities that we assist each year.