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Appropriations Committee Public Hearing - February 17, 2012
Testimony in Support of the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Disabled

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker, Senator Duff, Representative Hurlburt, Senator Markley, Rep. Miner and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. Our names are Lisa Boisvert, Deborah Durgin and William Durgin and we live in East Hartford. We are here today to thank the Legislature and the State of Connecticut for the continued funding of the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Disabled and ask for continued funding of this critical program.

Our family has been living with multiple sclerosis for over 20 years. Our daughter, Lisa Boisvert was diagnosed when she was 21, but had symptoms when she was in her early teens. Lisa is on the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Disabled. Bill also has MS and Deborah is disabled.

Lisa was one of the first people on the program; it has been a true life saver for our family. Lisa currently gets 2 hours a day, 7 days a week of a home health aide. She also gets a home maker 2 ½ hours a day/5 days a week. Lisa is totally disabled and is unable to transfer on her own. Lisa's home health aide gives her a shower, gets her dressed and ready for the day. Her homemaker helps with meal preparation, Lisa's laundry, cleaning and shopping.

Both of these caregivers were the only socialization that Lisa had with the outside world for the past three years. Our raised ranch home was not accessible. Lisa was trapped in her bedroom, a 12 x 15 foot room. The doorway was too narrow for her wheelchair; she spent her day between her bed and a recliner chair. She could not come out to the kitchen, let alone use the bathroom. If we had to get her to the doctors, we would transfer her onto an office chair and then have a total of seven transfers just to get out.

Imagine being trapped and unable to interact with people outside of your family. The program gave us access to having assistance and socialization. Lisa is only 38!

We have been very fortunate to have this program; it gives us some respite during the day when we know that the helpers are with Lisa. The program was a support to allow for Lisa's husband to go to work; it gives us time to care for ourselves including getting to the doctor, pharmacy or store. We have been able to keep Lisa at home with us. Even with this support, it is still extremely difficult to manage and things are very stressful. Lisa's husband recently left her and we don't know what is going to happen.

Please continue to fund the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Disabled, it has been a life saver for the 41 individuals living with degenerative neurological disabilities like MS, Parkinson's Disease and early onset Alzheimer's Disease. It is the only option for these individuals.

Thank you.