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**From:** Ron INW <ron.sparks@independencenorthwest.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 21, 2013 3:42 PM  
**To:** AppropriationTestimony  
**Subject:** Testimony to Appropriation Committee, 2/22/2013

Testimony of Ron Sparks  
Appropriations Committee  
February 22, 2013  
Department of Rehabilitation Services

My name is Ron Sparks and I live in Hamden. I'm writing to urge you to restore full state funding for CT's independent living centers.

I have been employed by Independence Northwest, a Center for Independent Living (CIL), since September of 2008. Since that time I have worked as an Advocate for people with disabilities, and as a Transition Coordinator, under the Money Follows the Person Demonstration Program (MFP), contracted by DSS. As an Advocate, I have assisted more than 25 people continue to live in the community independently. These people would likely have had to be institutionalized without that assistance. As a Transition Coordinator, I have assisted 51 people with disabilities and elders move to a community residence from skilled or acute nursing facilities. Although my salary is a part of the MFP contract, we subsidize many of the needs for our consumers with the independent living funding. Our center is currently funded for three full time and one part time transition specialists.

As you may know, the long term care dollars spent under the first year of MFP is reimbursed more than 75 percent for the first year. I have also tracked the amount of savings, on average, of a care plan in the community vs. the care plans in nursing facilities. The average cost in community long term care of consumers I've worked with saves more than 30 percent compared to what was paid to nursing facilities. These savings can carry on many years. Several of my consumers have plans that save state dollars, and have faced challenges that would not be covered by MFP funding. Without support coming from the state ILC funds, these people would be in jeopardy of returning

to institutions, where costs to the state would be increased. I submit that the tax dollars that my neighbors and I pay are saving money by including support for CILs in our state budget.

The MFP program, and by extension the CILs, are not only saving the state money. They are also changing the system that now concludes that people with disabilities and elders can only live their lives in the safety of an institution. This has been determined to be discrimination by the U.S. Supreme Court, and we are helping to give people options and choices that they previously have not had. As we all age and require some assistance, making sure that we have these choices are a priority to me. I hope that you see the benefits as well.

I know that every consumer that I have helped move into the community felt like a captive and are now free to participate in the community in ways that medical professionals never thought possible. Please support restoring funding to Centers in full. It is an investment that is paying off in dollars and in freedom.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

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