

TESTIMONY

Good Evening, My name is Michael Warburton and I am a resident of Waterbury. I am here to speak against the elimination of state funding to the five Centers for Independent Living in the Governor's Budget Adjustments. I am also here to speak in opposition to the Governor's proposal to give state agency heads the power to make necessary cuts. These cuts will disrupt the state's Money Follows the Person Program, a program designed to transition persons out of skilled nursing facilities back into the community with services, housing, and ongoing support. It will also eliminate Centers' vital role in preventing institutionalization.

Centers for Independent Living make differences in the lives of people with disabilities across the state. From transitioning residents out of expensive skilled nursing facilities under the state's Money Follows the Person Program to employing qualified persons with disabilities in our five centers, Centers for Independent Living provide vital services to people with disabilities. Centers for Independent Living provide services to prevent persons from entering costly skilled nursing facilities by providing information, referrals, options counseling and advocacy. We work with young people planning their transitions from our school system into college or employment while also working with our service veterans who have encountered disability in the course of their service to our nation or later in life.

I will speak about what I know best: the individuals that I help transition out of skilled nursing facilities back into the community through our state's Money Follows the Person Program. Because Centers for Independent Living have been doing transitions out of institutions since our inception in the 1980's and before, Centers for Independent Living are the most experienced partners in the Money Follows the Person Project. I can tell you that we are saving an estimated one million dollars in state Medicaid funds by doing this work, but what I really want to talk about are the people whose lives have been changed. I think about a 55 year old man that I transitioned out in December. Prior to being placed in a nursing facility, he had been an employee, a husband and a father. Suddenly he has a life changing disability that lands him in a nursing facility for several years. Through our efforts, we were able to assist him in finding an accessible apartment, personal care assistants and funds to establish a new life for himself. I also think about the man who I transitioned in January of this year who had been disabled from childhood. When his mother passed away, he found himself living on the streets with a disability. Eventually his disability became so bad that he landed in a nursing home. Through our efforts we were able to locate a fully accessible apartment and obtain personal care assistance through Money Follows the Person. Now he lives in a wheelchair accessible apartment with personal care assistants to care for him. I think about the families that I have reunited, a 97 year old woman who wanted nothing more than to be back in the home that her husband, a veteran now deceased, had built for her and to live there with her only surviving child. We assisted her and her daughter in securing the funds and expertise necessary to make her home accessible and with the help of the local access agency, she now has a full time live in caregiver.

If state funding is cut, where do I tell all of those who are still waiting to get out to go for information, advocacy and expertise to make their dreams of living in the community possible. The stories I have just told you will cease if funding is eliminated to Centers for Independent Living.