

Elizabeth O'Mara
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To whom it may concern:

The Connecticut Statewide Respite Care Program funded by the State Department on Aging and operated in partnership with the Alzheimer's Association Chapters of Connecticut and the Connecticut Area Agencies on Aging has been an invaluable resource for my husband and for our family. A budget cut to this program would be tragic for us and could potentially alter the level and type of services available to my husband.

Joe O'Mara is my husband. He was diagnosed with Early Onset Alzheimer's Disease two years ago. He was 53 and I was 48. His symptoms and this heart breaking diagnosis have changed his life and that of our family. In the prime of our life, we are raising two magnificent daughters. Unfinished business includes, both girls graduating from college, paying off our home, the ability to earn more income, save for retirement and the capacity to enjoy life as envisioned. The day to day challenges include keeping Joe engaged, stimulated, safe, and able to maintain function and quality of life for as long as possible.

Funds from the Statewide Respite Program have helped to support Joe's needs. He attends the Orchard House Medical Adult Daycare Center in Branford five days per week. This level of support supplements the supervision we are able to provide as a family and will allow Joe to remain in our home for a much longer period of time. Without these services, I fear that he will need to enter a skilled nursing facility. Unfortunately, it is not possible for me to stay home and provide this supervision on a full time basis. I must work in order to support his needs and the needs of our children including their education.

Because of the early onset of his disease, there is not a great deal of financial support to fund Joe's care needs. He currently does not qualify for federal assistance related to his age. The Respite Care Program has provided funds that help to support the cost of attending The Orchard House full time. This has made a huge difference in our sustainability. If we lose funds due to budget changes it will make it more difficult for me to financially support Joe's care needs. This is a small amount of money in the big picture and may seem like a cut that makes sense. However, relatively speaking, this small cut will make a very negative impact to the particular families in need.

Hopefully, our story helps to provide a vision and a foundation for decision making and planning. Please reconsider this proposed budget change. This change could prove catastrophic and result in very negative outcomes for my husband and many others in his situation. I thank you for taking the time to read and listen to my heartfelt plea.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth O'Mara