My name is Sharon Heddle. I am the Executive Director from Disabilities Network of Eastern CT, one of CT five Independent Living Centers.

We help people with all kinds of different disabilities who need a variety of services and I would like to tell you about a few of them that come to our center in eastern CT.

Petros had a stroke and went to an assisted living facility. Because of his stroke he was confused and had difficulty understanding and concentrating. He had been scammed out of his car from an employee of the facility he was in, told he was out of money and needed to move immediately among other things. His advocate helped him find an attorney, find an affordable apartment that was available immediately, arranged for a hospital bed, and found donations of furniture.

Mark had been in a car accident that resulted in him becoming a quadriplegic. He had an accessible van with a lift for his wheelchair that needed repairs and was inoperable. Living on a fixed income, he had no money for the repairs and felt stranded in his home. He had no way to get to the store, get to his appointments, or visit friends and family. His advocate contacted the garage and spoke with the owner who gladly lowered the price of the repairs. Disabilities Network as able to help with the funding to repair his van.

Milad is a man with a mental health disorder, learning disability and he is illiterate. When he was referred to Disabilities Network he was not taking his medication as directed because he could not read the labels, he was behind on paying his bills, he was depressed and was getting lost in the town he had lived in for many years. For the first few meetings the advocate went to his apartment building and had him follow her to the office. They made an appointment to see his doctor together and the doctor figured out what pills were current. The advocate and the consumer found a labeling system that worked for him indicating when to take his pills. They went to his bank where they set up his bills on autopay. Now he comes to the center about once a month with his mail and the advocate and consumer go through mail together.

Reduced funding over the years caused positions not to be filled when employees left the agency. This leaves us with fewer advocates to help the same number of people with disabilities gain or maintain their independence in the community. Restoring our funding to $529,000 would allow us to expand the quality of services we provide.