

Disability Action Committee

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To Honorable Members of the Senate Finance HHR Subcommittee:

My name is Keith Kessler. I am the Founder of the Disabled Action Committee in Virginia (DAC4VA) and a member of the state Commission on Community Integration. I've lived in Virginia for sixteen years. For the last ten years I've received services through the Elderly & Disabled Medicaid waiver, and I am a very active member of my community.

I come here today, because I'm about to lose the independence I have achieved through the waiver, as a result of a proposal in the Governor's budget. Item 306AAA would apply an individual instead of aggregate cost-effectiveness standard for waiver eligibility. This would reduce my weekly number of personal care hours to an unreasonable and unworkable level.

I now receive 116 hours per week to pay for Personal Care Aides to assist me in all Activities of Daily Living for my condition as a totally dependent Quadriplegic and Type II Diabetic. These hours have been carefully calculated to meet my medical needs and the help I need with my ADLs. The hours are based on statewide policies that are very carefully considered by the specialists who fill out the required forms for DMAS to accept or deny. DMAS approved 116 weekly hours for me under the current regulations because I need all of them.

If you adopt the Governor's proposal, I would lose about one-third of my needed hours and face the option of being warehoused in a nursing home – an unacceptable placement for someone like me – who is still able - with the "proper supports" - to live successfully and safely in the community. This would also affect many other people with severe disabilities since only the individuals with the greatest needs are hurt by this proposal. While our costs are high, the overall costs of the waiver are still cheaper than nursing home care. Virginia has made a lot of progress developing community based care and complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Please don't turn the clock back. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Keith Kessler

