

To Chairmen and Committee:

My name is Cathy Whitish.
I live in Glasgow, Montana. I
am a consumer and on the Board
of Directors with North Central
Independent Living Services. My
Independent Living Specialist assisted
me in getting funding for a new
wheelchair. Having this new wheelchair
has allowed me to get around safer.
I am part of the Glasgow
Cross-Disability Support Group.
I would like to see independent
living services continue to be provided
in Northeast Montana.

Sincerely,

Cathy Whitish

Cathy Whitish

Colleen

From: "Colleen" <ncls2@nemontel.net>
To: "Tom Osborn" <ncls.osborn@aofast.net>
Sent: Friday, January 07, 2005 2:10 PM
Subject: Fw: Testimony for IL

— Original Message —

From: Vickie Messelt
To: Colleen Forrester
Sent: Friday, January 07, 2005 1:23 PM
Subject: Testimony for IL

To Chairmen and Committee,

My name is Vickie Messelt. I live in Glasgow, Montana. I receive Independent Living Services out of the Glasgow Branch Office of North Central Independent Living Services. I completed the Living Well with a Disability workshop. I received assistance in applying to the Low Income Energy Assistance Program. I am learning how to use the computer, send email, and respond to email.

Sincerely,

Vickie Messelt



Do you Yahoo!?

Yahoo! Mail - now with 250MB free storage. Learn more.

1/11/2005

Dear Committee Chair and Members,

Independent Living Funding

Introduction/Brief History:

My name is Allen MadPlume. I was raised at Two Medicine Lodges, MT on the Blackfeet Reservation. In our front yard we had Buffalo Jumps towering above us one hundred and fifty feet. In our back yard we had a cottonwood forest with the river and beaver dams to explore. We were riding horses before we could walk. We knew a freedom that was not even known by our ancestors. In our freedom there were no wars to worry about. In our play we steered away from violent confrontations. I grew up in a culture of, respect your family, go to church, work hard, cowboy up, and eventually, get drunk and party it up, the last part of this culture being the instrument of my physical self-destruction. But it's only fair to remember that a society that allows such poisonous and destructive substances to be sold on the free market should accept it's share of the responsibility for the personal devastations these substances wreak on our lives. I am a C5-C6 quadriplegic as a result of an alcohol caused motor vehicle accident on Thanksgiving Day of 1995. I was the driver. I was overly intoxicated on Black Velvet, Budweiser, and anger, which led to a blackout, resulting with my accident. I was thirty-five years old. I had the job of my dreams with Bill Tamietti Construction building bridges, steel buildings and repairing dams. Starting as laborer I moved up to Labor Foreman to Carpenter Foreman in four months.

1) Olmstead Decision

a) I have been enjoying the grace of Independent Living since Nov. of 2000. Before that I was four years at South-winds Estates assisted living. Before that I spent three months with Park Place nursing home in Great Falls. Though their name suggests a park, those places are never a walk in the park. It was horrendous. Before that I was nine months recovering in the GF's hospitals If this government ever fails

to fund Independent Living Centers you will force me to either Live in a nursing home or a long term care facility, where the Personal Attendants answer to a company policy and not the residents rights. Where mental & physical abuse are not an uncommon occurrence. I am sure everyone knows that if this Legislature ever fails to fund ILC's, Montana will be in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act affirmed by the US Supreme Court's Olmstead Decision, which states that we have the right to choose where we prefer to live.

2) Make ILC's a part the Governor's Budget

- a) As long as I am alive I will always prefer to live in an environment of my choosing. I am sure you'll find that every disabled person who currently enjoys the privilege of independent living will never consciously choose to move into a nursing home.**
- b) There will always be a percentage of our population with disabilities. Every state in these United States will always be obligated to fund ILC's as long as there are people with disabilities. It is the responsibility of this legislature to always make funds available for every disabled person who chooses to live independently.**
- c) Since the state will always be required by law to always fund Independent Living, it seems to me that the most practical step now, for any intelligent human being, representing the residents of our communities, is to make these funds a permanent item in our state's budget. Barring a miracle, I'm not paralyzed for one more year. I'm paralyzed for the rest of my life.**

Independent Living Challenges

Social Security Pass Plan

- a) In 2003 the our President offered Social Security Recipients opportunities to shelter funds in saving toward a business, employment or self employment plan, and still retain Medicaid benefits. A plan must be structured to work toward financial independence for the Consumer to get approval from SSA.**
- b) My first inquiry with my Glacier County Human Services case manager was in the Spring of 2004, I was informed that the work**

incentive program was not being implemented with their Medicaid Eligibility Requirements. In fact they hadn't even heard about it. In January of 2005 they still have no clue.

Medicaid Eligibility Requirements

c) Montana's allowable monthly income limit with SSDI for Medicaid eligibility has been at \$525.00 + \$20.00 exclusion since 1996. I believe my first checks were \$614.00 and my Medicaid cash option premium was \$69.00. Any income over \$545.00 is collected by Medicaid's cash option. My monthly SSDI check is now \$676.00 due to the rise in the cost of living. My Medicaid spend-down is up to \$131.00. One would think Montana's monthly income limit for Medicaid eligibility would rise due to the increase in the cost of living. At least part or ½ what SS gives would help.

Signature: Allen Mad Plume

January 10, 2005

DEAR CHAIRPERSON & SENATORS:

I had to move from a very good job in Bismarck, North Dakota back home to the Fort Peck Reservation due to health problems and subsequent disability advocacy issues.

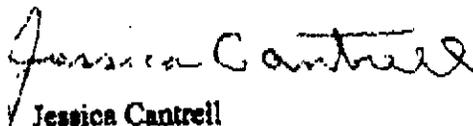
I have been working with the North Central Independent Living Program on the Fort Peck Reservation for about a year. I have needed their services since I have a disability that isn't apparent to the general public. I have scleroderma/fibromyalgia/lupus. These autoimmune diseases impact my ability to work at times; to gain access to my own home at times; and to manage financially with my impaired cognitive abilities.

At the current time, my scleroderma is in remission, but the NCILS program has been very helpful in researching my disability and offering me options and/or alternatives to dealing with my physical and mental capacities.

The North Central Independent Living Program has helped me to stay focused on my capabilities despite my health and disability advocacy issues. I have sought disability, but the process is complicated and with my energy level being so low; it is hard to continue on my own. I strongly support this program and the services it offers to those who can't always speak strongly for themselves.

I feel that this program is very important to our area and to the clients it serves.

Respectfully submitted by



Jessica Cantrell
P.O. Box 774
Wolf Point, MT 59201

January 11, 2005

Dear Chairman and Senators:

I am an enrolled member of the Ft Peck Tribes. I have a disability that is slowly taking control of my health and future. Because I would like to stay as Independent as possible, I referred myself to the North Central Independent Program at Poplar Mt. There are not that many Programs that can help you with staying dependent. I am thankful for having NCICS on the reservation. NCICS has helped me to get partials that I very much needed. I went to Indian Health Services and they helped with so much and North Central Independent living covered the rest. As you might know, reservations in any State have been prevalent to these needs, but if there is no funding to help you, then Programs like North Central Independent living are of great help to us.

P.O. Box 1012
Poplar MT. 59255

Sincerely,
Johnne Russell