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Date: February 15, 2018
To: House Committee on Appropriations
From: Ed Paquin, Executive Director, DRVT
In re.: Participant Directed Attendant Care program

I am Ed Paquin, Director at Disability Rights Vermont, our state's protection & advocacy agency for people with disabilities and the state's Mental Health Care Ombudsman.

You are looking at a lucky man. I have had the opportunity to serve as you do in the legislature. I have a good job, I own a home, I have been able to be a supportive parent to a wonderful child who has made me a grandfather and I have a supportive partner in my life.

I also happen to have a serious disability that sent me in directions I never imagined back when I made my living in construction. I still feel lucky, though, in that I can do what I do with a fair degree of physical independence.

I have peers who have serious disabilities who can achieve as much as I can, but whose physical limitations require that they have help to do some basic activities like bathing, toileting, preparing food and such. Yet with the participant directed attendant care program they have the opportunity to have the same aspirations as I, and YOU, have, and can do so without becoming impoverished.

Please don't eliminate one of the most rational programs for independence that our state runs. Instead, keep the program and let it grow, so that folks more disabled than I am can live lives that are a little more like yours and mine. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars in Medicaid long-term care, we should be able to spend a couple million on this.

Thank you for any help you can give.