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**Date:** February 19, 2020  
**To:** The House Committee on Appropriations  
**From:** Ed Paquin, Disability Rights Vermont  
**In Re.:** Funding for Attendant Services

DRVT appreciates the opportunity to speak with the Committee regarding a program that meets a specific need that is not otherwise well-met.

- Individuals with serious physical disabilities often need assistance with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) like eating, toileting and bathing and with Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs) like cooking, cleaning and meal preparation. Vermont has a variety of programs that assist with these needs that are referred to as Attendant Care or Personal Care Services.
- Most of these programs are funded through Medicaid and hence have strict income and asset limits.
- There are people with serious physical disabilities who require some degree of assistance, but who are otherwise quite capable of work and of other ways of participating in the life of our community.
- Vermont, through the Department of Disabilities and Independent Living's (DAIL) Attendant Services Program (ASP), runs a Participant Directed Attendant Care (PDAC) Program that is funded by General Funds, which was designed to be more flexible than Medicaid programs. PDAC very strictly allots hours of service to an individual, but allows the individual to employ family members or others of their choosing to provide the care. It does not require an individual to meet Medicaid's income and assets limits, though it has required that individuals be screened for qualifying for Medicaid in order to minimize costs to the State.
- The PDAC program allows a person with a disability to work without worrying about having to limit their income for fear of losing basic assistance with ADLs and IADLs. In effect, it tends to help equalize their access to the opportunities that society offers to the rest of us.
- The program currently costs the State roughly \$2.7 million and serves around 40 people, a declining number, because the program has not allowed new beneficiaries for four years. The Administration's FY'21 budget proposes to save about \$180,000 through attrition in the coming fiscal year. That is mostly by people either moving to other, Medicaid funded programs, or by dying.
- DRVT believes that rather than using the money saved by attrition, PDAC could enroll new individuals, giving them the freedom to work and to live a more economically secure life.

Your consideration of this use of funds could assist a few young, disabled individuals to build a career rather than a life of dependence!

*Defending and Advancing the rights of people with disabilities & mental health issues, and of the Deaf.*