

Testimony of Kelly Woodall
before the National Council on Disability
in Collaboration with the House Bipartisan Disabilities Caucus
Congressional Forum: “Disability in the Budget: Why It Matters”

Hello, my name is Kelly Woodall and I am 28 years old. I was born and raised in Raleigh, North Carolina, which is where I currently live. I moved back to Raleigh after finishing my bachelor’s degree in Psychology at St. Andrews Presbyterian College in Laurinburg, North Carolina. I am the new executive director of the only association run by self-advocates in North Carolina, that holds the 501c3 non-profit status. I have a huge southern family, who I love very much. I have a dog named Charlie; he is a 2-year old black lab, and he’s very spoiled. I enjoy anything involving music, especially singing and playing the piano. I enjoy the occasional horseback riding and swimming. In 2006 I was crowned Ms. Wheelchair North Carolina and I went to the national competition in Arkansas.

During my reign, and throughout my life, I have devoted much of my time to advocacy work for persons with disabilities. I have a developmental disability, Cerebral Palsy, and I use a motorized wheelchair for most daily activities. Because of CP, I am a quadriplegic with limited use of my right arm. I receive CAP MR-DD services, which is a Community Alternatives Program for Developmental Disabilities, for 70+ hours per week. The CAP workers come in the mornings to help me get ready by taking me to the restroom, giving me a shower, helping me get dressed, feeding me breakfast, driving me to work and

similar activities throughout the day. They help me maintain physical health by driving me to doctor appointments and administering my medication. They also encourage me to be more active in the community by taking me to see movies, hear bands play music and dining out with friends.

Without these services I could not live independently and I would be forced into a nursing home or other assisted living care facility such as an ICF. In these facilities I would not be eligible for CAP services, so I could not have the help I need to get to work every day. Therefore, I could not have a job, and this would limit me in being a productive member of society, paying taxes and stimulating the economy. Furthermore, in 2007 spending for nursing home care in the United States totaled approximately \$131.3 billion and accounted for approximately 6 percent of total health care spending. An ICF or intermediate care facility is much like a nursing home but without medical staff. An ICF is where persons with developmental disabilities live when they do not have enough support to maintain a safe and healthy life style in the community. For me an ICF would be my only option and it would cost the federal government \$75,000 annually. As opposed to these facilities the average cost of CAP/MRDD services is \$27,000 a year. You do the math!

Getting CAP MR/DD services was a long and drawn out process. When I was 12 years old my mother researched CAP services but she was told that I was not eligible because I am too high functioning. We tried to apply a couple years later, but they told us the waiting list was too long to even bother. Regardless of my physical disability I was told that I was not eligible because I

have no intellectual disability. I was put on the emergency waiting list when I moved into my own apartment because I am unable to take care of myself. My mother and family members were no longer able to take care of me and hold their own full time jobs and live their own lives. After three years of daily phone calls I finally reached out to a lawyer and news agencies. I was then invited to a press conference to tell my story and received CAP services soon after.

Finally won that battle but another one soon ensued. Part of CAP services is Supportive Employment which is designed to help recipients find and keep gainful employment. But when I did get the job of my dreams no one could tell me if or how having this job would affect my benefits. I began calling around and was disheartened to hear that I could not have a paying job and keep my CAP services. I was told I had to choose one or the other. However, without my services there would be no point in me having a job because I could not get up, get to work or maintain my well-being while working. I met with a specialist and my employer agreed to lower my salary so that I could keep my SSI, which is Supplemental Security Income. This is important because if I lose my SSI then I would lose Medicaid, which is required for receiving CAP services. I work 20 hours a week, which is not enough to pay for private services like CAP MR-DD and good health insurance like Medicaid, but without taking a deduction in salary I would lose both. In the end, I did not lose my job, but sacrifices were made.

Every morning I wake up and, with the help of CAP workers, do things that most people take for granted. With these services I can use the bathroom whenever I need to, take a shower, eat breakfast and drive to work. I am very

lucky to know people who have helped me in my struggles to live an independent life. Unfortunately, there are many others like me who are not as well connected who could benefit from these services.