

Testimony on PDS
Before the District of Columbia City Council
Committee on Health and Human Services
Chairperson Yvette Alexander
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Presented by
Angela Miller, Advocate for Individuals with Disabilities

Good morning/afternoon, Chairperson Alexander. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Angela Miller, and I represent the community of disabled individuals in DC, not just the elderly, but people who are in need of long term care independent of age.

Today, I want to discuss Person Directed Services. Known as PDS, this program would make it possible for me, and other disabled members of the community, to live more independently and maintain our dignity. In 1999, I had been in a nursing home for 2 and a half years. With the help of Bobby Coward and ULS, I was able to be moved out of the nursing home and into an apartment, where I lived independently for 10 years. During that time, I was walking with a walker but eventually needed to use a wheelchair due to the decline of my health. Now, I'm in an electric wheelchair and cannot cook as much as I used to; I need assistance to cook and clean more now, but living independently remains a very important quality of my life.

Encouragement and assistance are what every one of us need. I had to fight for the opportunity to continue living independently as I moved into an apartment that was wheelchair-accessible. We all run into barriers, but we continue to moving on and moving up no matter our age or disability. With help from MFP and Iona, ADRC, and HHS, PDS has been a resource for me, not only for receiving a better quality of care, but to promote our independence.

It was difficult to transition into a new home; upon moving to the Euclid, my more accessible apartment, there were a lot of issues between the agencies. At the time, I needed more hours

because I needed surgery on a plate in my head. The agencies couldn't always find the hours that we needed and the work that needed to be done in the apartment. PDS would have given me more hours for assistance. In addition to the service I needed, PDS would have supplied me with more information and medical consultation to help me understand what was happening since I would have a case manager.

Since I moved into the Euclid, I have more accessibility. PDS has helped me a lot; I got better services. PCA service has improved but the EPD Waiver Program and Participant Directed Service would allow me to employ aides who I could train. They would understand my needs even the fact that it is important for me to dress properly. I have a forte with clothes and shoes. Every time I go somewhere I have to look good, and I have to match. And now I can't cook much for myself anymore. That's why I need health assistance. I had to cook on Friday and cook enough food to last me until Wednesday. PDS helped provide an aide for 7 days, when previously I only had an aide for 5 days. PDS has expanded services, which have given me the opportunity to receive the assistance I need to remain independent.

So Independence is even more important to me now. After my liberation from a nursing home, independence has given me the opportunity to be productive and set personal goals. My first priority was to get my children back, followed by returning to work. My big initiative to get out of the nursing home was seeing other persons with disabilities who don't have persons to help them. Independence has significantly made me mentally stronger. Therefore, helping other people get out of nursing homes that don't want to be there is important to me—that's why I like PDS and Iona. My big goal is for seniors and other disabled people to have PDS and experience the same benefits of living more independently: being in control, making decisions that are best for us, and being given choices.

People like Judy Levy, Bobby Coward, Marjorie Rifkin, and Tiffany Johnson significantly helped me through my transitions. I ran into some barriers, but that's how being independent kept me going on. As many of us are getting older, we need a little more help—for me, to not only receive a better quality of care, but to promote my independence. For that reason, I'm supporting the quality of life and assistance of living that PDS offers. As a member of the disabled community, I have been able to gain back my dignity and respect thanks to PDS. Supporting the quality of life is a core value of public policy, which is why PDS needs support and implementation.