



Todd

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Affordable, Accessible Housing Can Help People Stay Out of Institutions

"I am a 46 year-old New Yorker who has cerebral palsy and asthma. Until 2003 I was living on my own and working steadily. I worked with the IRS as a collection representative and in tax payer services from 1987 to 2000. After that I worked for Kingtele Services in 2000 on a temporary basis as a customer service representative, and for H&R Block as a tax specialist on a seasonal basis until 2002.

"My life since I had to stop working has not been going very well. Because of the decrease in income, I couldn't afford the monthly payments on my home. I had to sell my home or lose it to the bank. I went from what I felt was the top to the bottom.

"Now, I'm living with someone else temporarily but it can be difficult and precarious. It's not a permanent solution. I'm trying to find housing on my own. With a fixed income, it's difficult without help. If there had been more accessible and affordable housing available when I lost my job it would have made losing my home a lot easier emotionally. I would have known that I had another place to go."

In New York City right now, Todd has three options if he can't find housing: living with someone else, which is a day-to-day existence with no tenant rights; trying to get placed in the one accessible shelter in the City; or living in a nursing home.

"With the budget cuts that are proposed it makes me think that people want those of us with disabilities warehoused again, like we were up until the early 70s. I want to speak out against that. I want people to know that I can take care of myself, I can work; I can be a productive member of the community. I don't need to be shut away. What my own apartment means to me is that it makes me feel I'm a person, I can do it on my own as I've always tried to do.

"There's limited affordable, accessible housing for people with disabilities. People on a fixed income can't afford what's out there now. Those coming out of institutional living don't have the housing support to stay in the community – the Nursing Home Waivers need housing money. The government is just looking at the short-term dollars and cents, not the people. I think they have to connect a face with the numbers. They have to realize that there are a lot of people out there that need help and it's less expensive in the long run to help people stay in their own homes rather than go to a nursing home."