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**The Disability Rights Community Calls on Congress to Extend Funding to Help People Leave Institutions and Move Back Home!**

(Albany, NY): Money Follows the Person (MFP) was enacted in 2005 with strong bipartisan support and is one of the most successful Medicaid demonstrations. MFP was designed to help states transition people with disabilities from institutions into the community, and to increase access to home and community based services. Unfortunately, MFP expired September 30, 2016, and states are running out of funding.

“Money Follows the Person is the rare bipartisan policy solution that actually promotes community integration”, states Bruce Darling, President and CEO of the Center for Disability Rights in Rochester, NY and Board President of the National Council on Independent Living. “MFP has enabled more than 75,000 disabled people, from 47 states to get out of institutions and into their own homes in the community. Reauthorizing MFP is crucial to protecting the lives and liberty of disabled Americans.”

In New York, MFP funds the Open Doors Transition Center and Peer Outreach & Referral programs. Open Doors helps individuals living in nursing homes return to the community and assists individuals with developmental disabilities living in large group homes and institutions transition to smaller community settings or more integrated community programs. The New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) administers the Open Doors program via a contract with the Department of Health, partnering with its member Independent Living Centers to staff over 50 Transition Specialists and 100 peer advocates statewide.

“Thanks to the Open Doors program, over 1,800 people with disabilities and older adults have been able to get assistance to leave institutions and move back home,” stated Lindsay Miller, the Executive Director of the New York Association on Independent Living. “Without action on the part of Congress, funding for this important program will dry up, Miller stated.

Congress must work to save and adequately fund MFP. It can do this by including reauthorization of MFP in the negotiations on larger funding issues and by passing the EMPOWER Care Act (S. 2227) immediately.

“We know from federal Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services data that there are approximately 20,000 New Yorkers living in nursing facilities who have expressed an

interest in returning to the community,” noted Miller. “Open Doors is the program responsible for reaching out to those individuals, providing them with objective information on the long-term services and supports that are available to them, and helping to facilitate their transition back to their community if that is their choice. We need Congress to save this critical program by passing the EMPOWER Care Act, or by including additional funding for MFP in the budget.”

*The New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) is a statewide membership organization of Independent Living Centers (ILCs), community-based not-for-profit providers of advocacy, services and supports for New Yorkers with disabilities of all ages. ILCs are controlled by, and largely staffed by, people with disabilities. NYAIL strengthens local Independent Living Centers and is a leader in the civil rights movement for all people with disabilities.*