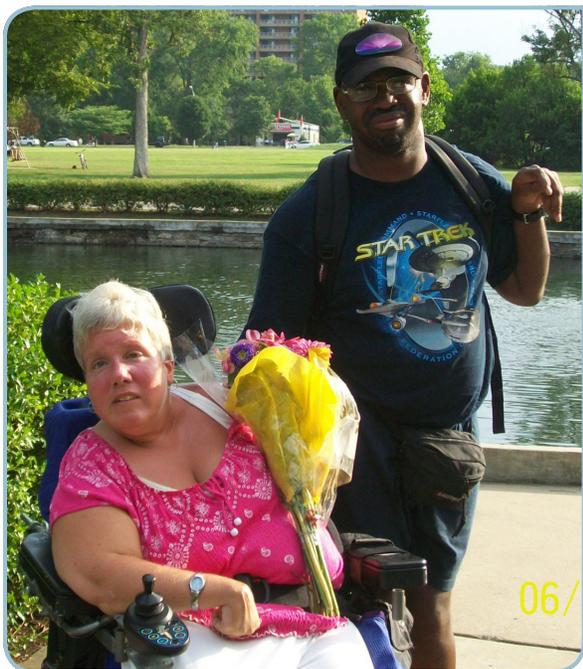


Lorri (age 50)



My name is Lorri. I want to share a little about myself with you. I am 50 years old and I live in Nashville, Tennessee. You should know that I love my dog, Holly. And Holly loves me too. She is very protective of me—once she even bit a new visitor! Not hard, though. Don't worry; no bleeding was involved. Apart from having a dog, I go to concerts. My favorite concerts to go to are the New Kids on the Block! I'm not afraid to admit that I still have a crush on Donny. Even my fiancé knows that I have a crush on Donny. Did I mention I have a fiancé? We're getting married next September! I also really enjoy going to see the Nashville Predators hockey team play. Most Sundays, I help out at my church during the morning services. I am frequently asked to speak at events. So I guess you could say that I'm a pretty good public speaker! I also think I'm a good listener.

I am diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy. And my IQ is typical. I cannot walk or talk on my own, but I use a power wheelchair to get around on my own. I also use an Augmentative Alternative Communication, or "AAC" for short, device on my iPad to talk with people. I type the message in using my knuckle and my iPad says the message out loud for me. It's pretty cool! Sometimes, if I'm typing a longer message, I let people read my iPad while I type. This way whoever I'm talking to can finish my thoughts for me.

There are some challenges to having Cerebral Palsy. For example, it's really hard to find qualified staff to help me live. It's really important that I have a staff member helping me to do things like run errands or cook dinner. It's hard because there's a lot of red tape that prevents me from finding a good staff. Luckily, I like my staff now. Her name is Patricia. Sometimes, Patricia and I even go to movies together!

I receive a mix of different supports and benefits. I receive TennCare and Medicare. I also receive railroad retirement funds because my dad also works for the railroad. All of these supports—TennCare, Medicare, and railroad retirement—pay for my income, medical bills, and support staff. Really, these programs pay for everything I have.

I'm afraid of what may happen if the funding for these programs is cut or reduced. If these financial supports were not available, I would be completely lost. It feels like some congressmen and other policy decision-makers don't understand that people like me need these programs to live. If funding for these supports are reduced, I may not be

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able to afford rent. For example, if programs like Section 8 housing are cut, people with disabilities cannot afford rent. Where would I live? Where would other people with disabilities live? Other people cannot afford nursing homes or in-home health support if TennCare is reduced. If my social security funding was reduced, I would not be able to afford anything. And it’s not just me! People who receive social security wouldn’t be able to afford anything.

Thanks for taking the time to learn about me and how I live. I hope my story motivates you to vote thoughtfully on reducing funding to government programs so that people like me can live. ■

