

TESTIMONY OF EILEEN M. HEALY
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE 2/19/20
INCREASE FUNDING FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS

My name is Eileen Healy. I live in Woodbury. I am the President of the CT Association of Centers for Independent Living. I'm here today to thank you for your support of the Independent Living Centers (ILCs) and for adding funding last year for deaf services. The Governor has proposed \$612K in funding that supports all FIVE of Connecticut's Independent Living Centers, and while we are grateful for those dollars, it isn't sufficient to meet the needs of our consumers.

The ILCs provide essential services for people with all types of disabilities and of all ages. We are people with disabilities providing assistance to other people with disabilities, and we are unique because we have life experiences that provide support and real life "how-tos," that are frequently low cost solutions to obstacles people with disabilities encounter daily. We provide peer mentoring, information & referral, skills training, youth transition and transition from nursing facilities back to community living, plus many other services including vocational services, assistive technology, aging in place, services to veterans and people living with HIV and AIDS. Our services are individualized to the needs of the person and their goals. We assist people to obtain access to transportation, housing, education, employment, as well as many other activities that result in community-based independent living and self-sufficiency. State Independent Living dollars ensure that our services are free and available throughout the state, reducing yet another barrier to achieving Independent Living.

However, because of funding reductions and/or continued funding at the reduced level over the last several years, our core services to people with **all** types of disabilities has never been restored. The centers have cut back on the towns we serve, instituted waiting lists, laid-off staff and reduced salaries as well. In order for the ILCs to assist people with disabilities across the state, we need an additional \$130K per center, per year; a total increase of \$650K. The increase would enable the ILCs to hire full time Deaf Services staff instead of the current part time staff and add another full time staff member to meet the needs of members of the broader disability community. According to an independent study conducted by the Governor-appointed CT State Independent Living Council, to adequately serve the State of CT the ILCs should be funded at \$5.5M. While that amount may be unrealistic in our current fiscal climate, it is an amount to strive towards, especially when considering that the ILCs annually transition over 200 people with disabilities, including elders, out of costly nursing facilities, saving the state over \$10M every year. Without the state IL funding we can't achieve these savings and do even more.

I urge you to increase funding for ILCs by \$650K. Thank you for your time, attention and consideration.

Eileen M. Healy

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