

TESTIMONY OF BRYNN HICKEY

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE 2/19/20

INCREASE FUNDING FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS

My name is Brynn Hickey. I live in Montville. I am the Program Director of Disabilities Network of Eastern CT and the Deaf Services Coordinator for the five Independent Living Centers. I would like to begin by thanking the committee for the increase in funding for deaf services. The Governor has proposed \$612K in funding to all the centers. We are grateful for this funding, but it isn't sufficient to meet the needs of the community that we serve.

The centers provide vital support to people of all disabilities and ages. The staff at the centers use their personal experiences overcoming barriers in the community to assist others to problem solve their own obstacles. We are a place to receive individualized services catered to the needs of the person with a disability. Consumers are encouraged to live and participate in their communities.

With the increase in funding last year each center has hired part time staff to begin building a deaf services program at each center. Each center hosted open house events and advertised services on social media. Some of the centers have begun hosting monthly meetings and doing outreach events to spread the word of the new services that are available.

Due to several years of reduced or flat funding our services to all our consumers have not been fully restored. In order to provide services to people of all disabilities and statewide we need an additional \$130K per center per year. The increase would allow the centers to increase the deaf services staff to a full-time position and another full-time staff person to serve a variety of disability groups.

We are asking for an increase in funding to the Independent Living Centers by \$650K. Thank you for your consideration.

Brynn Hickey

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