

TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL RAYE

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE 2/19/20

INCREASE FUNDING FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS

My name is Michael Raye. I am currently working as a Vocational Advocate for Disabilities Network of Eastern CT. We opened an office in Hartford Nov of 2019. I would like to begin by thanking the committee for the increase in funding for deaf services. We are grateful for this funding, but it isn't enough to meet the needs of the community that we serve.

During the legislative session in November of 2019 we were given an increase in funding for each center, that includes the Independence Center in Hartford. The Hartford Independence Center hired a hearing staff person that can communicate via sign language to assist the deaf and hard of hearing consumers in self-advocacy, Housing, and Medicare.

I would like to share with you a journey about a deaf and blind consumer who was referred to me from Bureau of Rehabilitation Services in February 2019. Her goal was to work in the field of Human Services. She is a strong advocate for the deaf and blind. The increase in funding has afforded her an opportunity to qualify for an internship at the Independence Center. This process has taken one year to get to this point. I would like to shed light on this situation the individual has a dual disability (Deaf and Blind) I have several other consumers who have dual disabilities and requires a lot of resources. We at the Independence Center are grateful for the increase in funding again this isn't enough.

Another point I would like to share why does DNEC collaborate with the Independence Center? Once a consumer has maintained employment, he or she can continue to get services from the Independence Center regarding self-advocacy, ADA assistance, Medicare assistance, transportation, and continuing education. As you can see it takes funding to accomplish the many needs of our consumers. We again thank you very much for what you have done, but we need more funding. Thank You.

Michael Raye

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