

Testimony of Scott M. Robbins  
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing  
February 19, 2020

**Increase Funding to CT's Independent Living Centers & Deaf Services.**

I have worked at two independent living centers in Connecticut for over twenty years. Independent living Centers serve persons with all types of disabilities and of all ages. I have first hand knowledge of the valuable services that CT's five independent living centers provide to people with disabilities and their families in our state. The centers, which are staffed by qualified persons with disabilities, provide information and referral to thousands of individuals each year, peer counseling, independent living skill training, institutional transition back to the community, youth transition to school and work, advocacy and deaf services.

The independent living centers are non-residential and provide a single point of entry into disability services, and are a key transition site under the Money Follows the Person (MFP) state initiative; moving people out of nursing homes back into the community. Not only is transitioning elders and people with disabilities back to the community from nursing facilities the right thing to do, it also saves the state millions of dollars through the enhanced Medicaid match and in institutional care. Centers for Independent Living receive limited federal funding, however the funding is to provide **specific** disability services. Without the state funding (through the Department of Aging & Disability Services) the centers would lose their infrastructure that subsidizes MFP, Deaf Services, Aging & Disability Resource Centers, Ticket to Work and other cost saving programs. **The relatively small investment from the state of \$1.3 million (divided equally among the five independent living centers) reaps huge cost saving rewards. (We are seeking a modest \$130,000.00 increase per center to expand the Deaf Services Advocate position in each CIL to full time and hire one full time general Independent Living Advocate.)**

Consumers of the centers' services are assisted to achieve their goals of self-sufficiency and autonomy, which results in state savings through reduced reliance on state and federal entitlement programs. Many consumers return to work, go back to school, obtain employment for the first time, secure affordable housing and learn the skills necessary to lead independent and fulfilling lives in the community.

The unintended result of under funding for the centers will be increased Medicaid and Unemployment Compensation costs, even greater reliance on costly state funded services and fewer people maximizing their independence. Many people with physical and psychiatric disabilities will be unable to receive vital support services and many will be stuck in costly institutional settings.

I urge the committee to fund the independent living centers at 1.3 million.

Submitted by:

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