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Testimony to the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Charlie Conway, and I am the Executive Director of Access Independence, which is one of the five Independent Living Centers in CT. I wish to thank the members of the Appropriation Committee for allowing me this time to speak. The past year has been difficult of us all, but even more so for those with a disability. The Independent Living Centers have seen a 50% increase in the need for our services over the past year. This is adding an additional strain on an already taxed system. The Centers are the front lines for those with disabilities and we are required to meet a set a deliverables per our contract each year, but the state is expecting us to do that for around \$60,000 per Center. That is less than half the cost of one full-time state employee. My Centers service area covers 14 towns, Center for Disability Rights covers 37 towns, Disabilities Network of Eastern Ct covering 38 towns, Independence Northwest covering 44 towns, and Independence Unlimited covering 35. We have shared with you the study done showing that to properly fund Center for Independent Living in the state would be over 5 million dollars per year, we realize that this currently is not possible, but we are stating that each Center needs to be currently funded at a rate of \$550,000 per Center. The Centers our vital to the state and that was proven once again during the current pandemic. The Centers created and donated to first responders, nursing homes, the state inventory, and many others, 20,000 Face shields, 5000 ear savers and we were able to redesign a by-pap valve to make it compatible with 3D printing and then produce 100 for a hospital in need.

Each year I come before you I have stated that the Centers are one of the best returns on investment that the state has. The funds we save the state just through the Money follows the Person program more than shows this, yet there is so much more we could do, so much more the state could save, and so many more people helped, yet our full potential is never tapped into and realized. I am imploring this committee to hear what I and those that will testify after me are saying and fund the Centers at \$550,000