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**Testimony To Appropriations Committee Hearing  
February 22, 2021**

**RE: Funding for Centers for Independent Living**

Dear Honorable Chairs, Ranking Members and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am testifying tonight as both a former Director of Center for Disability Rights, but also from my vantage point as Director of a Center for Independent living in Rhode Island - Ocean State Center for Independent Living.

Starting in January of 2020, I have had the pleasure of being the Executive Director of the Center for Independent Living in Rhode Island. From that vantage point, I was able to see, experience, and appreciate the support of the State of Rhode Island for Independent Living. Rhode Island supports IL at at much higher level than CT supports its IL programs.

This support comes in the form of funding in far excess of the funding that CT grants to its CILs as well as the enthusiasm for including Ocean State CIL in the center of all of Rhode Island's plans for people with disabilities.

I have found it very refreshing to receive support for OSCIL's programs without having to go the the yearly process of begging the State for every little bit of funding. I wish for Connecticut's five Centers for Independent Living an equal commitment and partnership from the State of CT.

In the past, when I have come before you in my capacity as a Director with one of CT's CILs, I have taken care to share with you the level of funding that other States have provided to their CILs. These States, like CT, have also experienced budget challenges, and sometimes they have had to reduce

some funding in some years. But in other years, they are able to restore the funding and even increase it. This is not the case in CT.

CT's CILs today, in actual dollars, receive less support from the State than they did in 1989. The result has been a gradual erosion of the resources and staffing that people with disabilities need in CT. We need to reverse this now.

To those who say "not now, we may have another deficit", I ask "when?" CT's CILs have been waiting for many years; and even in years when CT has enjoyed surpluses, the CILs have not received the restoration of their funding.

I see with my own eyes the difference that the funding has in Rhode Island. We are able to serve so many more consumers, and provide some types of needed services that CILs in CT are unable to. In Rhode Island, we do Assistive Technology services and housing modifications with our State funding, and we are able to help many many folks to stay in the community and not have to go into nursing homes. We don't have these services in CT.

I see this in an even more pronounced way in Massachusetts where each CIL (there are 10 in Massachusetts) receives over \$700,000 in funding. In addition, each CIL in Massachusetts gets other State funding to do other things such as critical youth transition services.

Connecticut's five CILs do amazing things with the little resources that they have, and they are doing even more during this COVID public health emergency. They can be very transformative with additional funding. In fact, they will actually save the State money in so many areas by keeping people in the community, transitioning people out of nursing homes, and generally reducing the dependence of people with disabilities on expensive State provided services.

Now is the time to step up and fund Connecticut's five CILs at the level they need: the bare minimum functional level of \$550,000 per CIL.

Thank you for your consideration.

Marc Anthony Gallucci, Esq.