

Testimony of Brynn Hickey

Montville, CT

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing March 3, 2021

I am the Program Director at the Disabilities Network of Eastern CT. The independent living centers in Connecticut serve individuals with a variety of disabilities across the age spectrum. The center's themselves hire people with disabilities who walk along side other's with disabilities role modeling independence in the community of their choosing. The center is a no wrong door point of entry into a myriad of supports across the state. The center's receive federal funding but that only partially supports the great work of the centers that provide cost saving programs like Money follows the person, Aging & Disability Resource center, Ticket to work and other cost saving programs.

Currently the centers receive \$312,972 in state funding which is split between all the 5 centers. This has been our funding for several years and has caused the centers to lay off staff and curtail our catchment areas. During the pandemic the centers have stepped up to provide services to a group of people with disabilities who were working and living in the community independently but due to the pandemic have lost their jobs and were navigating a new world. In adjacent states their funding from the state is very different. As you can see in the attached flyer the funding levels of our neighboring state is significantly higher.

The unintended result of this reduction in funding to our center will result in more people with disabilities falling through the cracks and depending on expensive safety net or institutional programs.

I urge the committee to fund the independent living centers at the level of \$550,000 each.

Brynn Hickey

Montville, CT

Program Director

Disabilities Network of Eastern CT

860-823-1898