

Testimony of Katherine A. Carver, Chairperson
Independence Unlimited Center for Independent Living
Appropriations Sub-committee Public Hearing
Department of Social Services Budget
February 11, 2010

Good Evening.

My name is Katherine Carver from Hartford CT.

Independence Unlimited, Inc. (IU) is a non-residential, non-profit center for independent living that serves diverse populations in 38 cities and towns mainly in Hartford County. The Center, established in 1982, is governed, managed by people with disabilities, and employs people with disabilities. IU's mission is to assist people with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining their personal independence and live in the community of their choice. IU is a center for independent living as defined by the Rehabilitation Act and provides the four core services required by the Act: advocacy (both individual and systems), peer counseling, skills training and information and referral. IU is community based and responsive to the needs of the communities it serves. In response to community needs, IU established the following additional programs:

- **Access Greater Hartford** provides training and technical assistance on accessibility, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act and other disability issues to remove barriers to full inclusion of people with disabilities.
- **Local Beginnings/Universal Outcomes** provides information and training in both English and Spanish to parents of children with disabilities on IDEA, ADA, and other disability related topics.
- **New Beginnings Peer Support Group** is a model program that provides skills training, peer counseling and support to people with disabilities who want to transition from institutions/nursing homes into community based living situations.
- **Project TEAM** provides outreach and mentors to people with disabilities in the Bristol area who are at risk of premature entry into an institution/nursing home.
- **Leaders of Tomorrow Youth Group** provides skills training, peer counseling and social and recreational opportunities to youth with disabilities and young adults 16 to 30 who are transitioning from school to work or from living with family to living on their own.

During the past five years, Independence Unlimited:

- provided multiple, long term services (over 40 hours) to 1500 people with disabilities. Of this number, 230 were at risk of immediate premature entry into a nursing facility. **It would have cost \$26,128,000 per year (at a rate of \$113,600 per year, per person) to provide for these individuals in a nursing facility. At Medicaid rate of \$61,800 per year the cost would be \$14,214,000.**

- transitioned 165 people with disabilities from institutions, including nursing facilities, into the community. **It would cost \$18,744,000 per year if they remained in a nursing facility (Medicaid rate cost \$10,197,000).**
- provided information and referral services to 5,000 unduplicated callers

The DSS budget line for Centers for Independent Living was cut **\$251,000 (38%)** in FY 2009/10, and the Governor again proposes to **eliminate** state funding to CIL's in FY 2010/11. The state dollars support the infrastructure for the many services the CILs provide. While we are grateful for ARRA funds, there are many strings attached to the funds that will prohibit the use of those funds for essential operating costs of the center.

IU and other CIL's have a few grants that require matching funds. State dollars are needed to leverage to get more funds to serve more people. Without State dollars, it will be difficult to come up with a match. We cannot use ARRA dollars to match other federal funds. One new area for IU that we serve with a match is outreach and assistance to people with disabilities 60 yrs of age and over.

Independence Unlimited led the state in transitions under the Nursing Facilities Transition project and currently employs four transition coordinators to transition people under the new Money Follows the Person program and one half time coordinator under state funding. IU was instrumental in providing training and technical assistance to 22 statewide transition coordinators for Money Follows the Person.

People often bloom where they are planted. Being in their community of choice: with the assistance of CIL support a dream of many. Many for the first time experience the real world. The costs, to keep people in institutions; is far more than the cost savings with services from our Center and other Centers for Independent Living. Being planted in an institution greatly curtails independence.

We hope that legislators will not go the route of being "Penny wise and Pound foolish" as the State Budget is reviewed.