

Testimony on Centers for Independent Living, 2013
Appropriations Committee hearing for state Department
of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)

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Appropriations Committee
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Thursday, Feb. 21, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

I work part-time for Center for Disability Rights in West Haven. I answer phones in the afternoon and I do intake, or Information and Referral. I talk to people and listen to their problems and needs and try to offer them useful information and I try to refer them to other places where they might find other useful information or support services – like shelter, clothing, income, health benefits.

- One of the people I talk to has been diagnosed with Stage 4 throat cancer. He can no longer work because of his treatments.
- Some have been living with friends and are on the verge of eviction because their landlord has to sell the house.
- One man's father died and his mother took out a second mortgage on the house when she was 83 and not in her right mind. She died in January and he is waiting on foreclosure of his house that he has lived in since he was a child and that the bank now owns due to the second mortgage.
- One woman was sleeping in her wheelchair and needed a couch. She also did not have a kitchen table. We helped her get those and someone in the community even donated a washer/dryer for them.
- Some people are unable to get out of their house because they're new amputees due to diabetes or gun shot wounds and they require ramps, which we lend for simply a security deposit. When they return the ramp, they get the security deposit back.

I am disabled. I was injured in 1982. I lived in Wethersfield at Lasher Court, which was built by Tom Lasher, who died of Lou Gehrig's Disease some years ago. I was on crutches and in a wheelchair at the time as I slowly recovered from a severe bicycle/automobile accident that nearly took my life. I know how it is to find yourself suddenly disabled. Without your own resources. Depending on your family, friends and the community support services that are available.

Along with the four other Centers for Independent Living in Connecticut, Center for Disability Rights helps people find those resources. Without us, there would be many more desperate people in the state. There would be a lot more homelessness. There would be a lot more in-fighting among disabled people and people who depend on state benefits for a slew of other reasons, including mental illness.

We provide services to many people every day. We help people go from nursing homes back into the community by helping them find an apartment they can afford. We help people with all kinds of disabilities write resumes, gain job interview skills that will help them find work and become productive members of the community and achieve their goals of self-sufficiency, which, in the end, actually translates into SAVINGS through reduced use of state and federal entitlement programs.

Please listen to and read carefully the testimony of the others. I do not know what the thousands of people we help every year would do without the Centers for Independent Living that are now on the chopping block.

I'm sure there are many important resources that are threatened with budget cuts. But human lives are at stake with this one. Senior citizens are living in cars. Mothers are raising children in cars. People are in the streets in wheelchairs. We need Centers for Independent Living to help those in need improve their situations.

Sincerely,

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