

Kane, Brittany

From: Debbie Melaragno <deb@ctsilc.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 21, 2013 11:38 AM
To: AppropriationTestimony
Subject: Please support Centers for Independent Living

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PLEASE SUPPORT INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS, THEY MUST BE PART OF THE GOVERNOR'S BIENNIAL BUDGET

Hello, my name is Debbie Melaragno. I am the Administrative Assistant for the Connecticut State Independent Living Council, Inc. Our council is federally mandated through the Rehabilitation Act to coordinate, fund and promote Independent Living in Connecticut. The State Independent Living Council develops a State Plan of Independent Living and helps support the Five Centers of Independent Living in our State.

I am both shocked and saddened to see that the Centers for Independent Living are proposed for elimination from the Governor's Biennial Budget! Why are Centers important?

* Centers for Independent Living are a single point of access to services for all people regardless of the nature or type of disability.

*Centers promote empowerment and self-reliance for persons with disabilities, regardless of the nature or type of disability.

*Centers are a single point of access for services and activities that make self-sufficiency a reality.

*Centers are consumer controlled and community based, staffed primarily by persons who have disabilities.

*Centers are a place where people with disabilities can turn to establish independent living goals – and to achieve them.

*Centers are cost effective. Low administrative cost and the absence of bureaucracy gives the taxpayers of Connecticut the maximum return on their dollar.

Over the years, I have seen the Center dollars get cut, yet they are serving more and more people each year. People who go to the Centers for help feel comfortable because the staff at the centers have disabilities themselves and they have "walked in their shoes". Please do not eliminate the Centers from the budget.

Thank you.

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