

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Cathy Ferry. I live in Colchester, Ct. I am the Vice President of the Ct Association of Centers for Independent Living (CACIL), and I am the Executive Director of the Disabilities Network of Eastern Ct (DNEC), in Norwich.

I speak in support of HB 5052. AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICE PROGRAMS. The proposed budget provides continued state funding for Ct's 5 Centers for Independent Living (CILs). The \$528, 680 are administered through the Dept. of Rehabilitation Services (DORS). Ct's 5 CILs provide crucial services to persons with ALL types of physical and mental disabilities of ALL ages in ALL areas of the state. CILs are staffed and managed largely by people with disabilities and our mission is to educate and empower people with disabilities to achieve their goals of self-sufficiency and autonomy, which results in state savings through reduced reliance on state and federal entitlement programs. CILs enable people with disabilities to maintain stability and participation in their communities, living and saving the state approximately \$4.4 million. The CILs are an integral part of Money Follows the Person (MFP). In one year, CILs transitioned 164 persons with disabilities from nursing homes to the community.

In 2012 Centers for Independent Living provided 4,542 callers with disability related information and referral services, 1,102 people with disabilities with advocacy and independent living skills training, peer counseling, youth and educational services, among other vital support services, 163 people with disabilities with services to obtain and maintain employment, 200 people with disabilities with services to obtain and maintain affordable, accessible housing, 70 people with disabilities with services to obtain transportation, and, 453 people with disabilities with services that prevented institutionalizations, saving the state an estimated \$11.4m annually. This is a remarkable return on a very low investment from the state. State funding leverages match funding for federal independent living grants, Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) funds, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, and various other foundation and private funding sources.

In 2013, the number and complexity of cases handled by CILs increased. With cuts to food stamps, skyrocketing energy and housing needs, and a still confusing and sometimes overwhelmingly difficult system to comprehend for those in need, it will continue to do so. We advocate for, and model community inclusion and ADA compliance. We fund ramps and bathroom accessibility. We help towns and civic organizations to review, and hopefully, to increase the accessibility of their buildings, their forms of communication, visual, oral, written and via specialized accessible computer and smart phone programs.

Currently, my CIL, DNEC, is using Norwich CDBG funds to build ramps, providing safe egress and community accessibility for 4 low income individuals with disabilities who reside in Norwich. Their situations are heart rending, as is their courage and determination to work with us to help them to reach these goals. I am thankful that DNEC is here to put that federal/city funding to best use, help to hire competent contractors who will meet ADA and zoning requirements in a timely, safe and cost effective manner. What a wonderful symbiotic use of what could be a bureaucratic morass for funding, effective over site and screening by DNEC,

personal choice, dignity and even literal freedom for the 4 individuals with whom we are collaborating.

So, on behalf of our consumers, their families, our boards and staff, and as a person living with disabilities, I thank you the Legislature, and the Governor for continuing to provide us the means to do this life changing work. AND, if the state continues its positive fund growth, we would like to talk to you in the future about restoring our state funding to its original levels, many years ago. Thank you.