

RE: The Appropriations Committee public budget hearing for Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) will be held on Friday, February 27 at 5:00 PM at the Legislative Office Building (LOB), Room 2C.

Pertaining to:

As of February 18, 2015, the Governor's proposed 2016/2017 biennial state budget eliminates all funding for the Centers for Independent Living from the Department of Rehabilitation (DORS) budget. Simply put, the current \$502,346 in state funding is proposed for \$0 in 2016/2017!!!

Dear Connecticut Legislators,

My name is Todd Johnston and I live on 86 Breezy Corners Road in Portland Connecticut. I'm here today to urge you not to apply the budget cuts to funding for the five Centers for Independent Living (CIL's) within the State including Access Independence. For those of you who might not know what the Centers for Independent Living provides is that they assist people with all types of disabilities live an independent life within the community. This is done through their five core services, which are:

- . Information & Referral

- . Independent Life Skill Training
- . Advocacy
- . Transitional Services
- . Peer Support

Last year the CILs saved the State \$5,545,096, which is more than ten times the amount CILs received from the State. If the Governor's budget stands, Connecticut's Centers for Independent Living may not continue to exist. This would be devastating to our seniors, wounded war veterans and disabled populations. One out of five people in Connecticut are disabled.

I am the Northeast Regional Coordinator for the Peer and Family Support Program for the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation. I can tell you the benefits offered through Peer Mentoring are essential to helping those newly injured get through rehab and into the community. Reduction in offerings of

Peer Support through the CIL's could end up being a cause for longer rehabilitation stays and greater medical costs.

An offshoot to the five core services is providing care for the Family Caregivers which is partially done by the course offered called Powerful Tools for Caregivers. I have taught a class leader training at Access Independence in Stratford, CT in the fall of 2014 and will be providing the six week course starting on April 9, 2015 through May 15. This course teaches the family caregiver tools to care for themselves while they care for their loved ones. The course helps the family caregiver deal with anger, guilt, and frustrations of being a caregiver. If funding is cut to the CIL's the availability of such course offerings will be greatly reduced if not eliminated from being provided at Access Independence.

In my mentoring profession I realize the benefits the clients receive from the CIL's and enjoy being able to refer my peers to the CIL's for more information and resources.

I request that our CT legislatures deny the budget cuts to the funding of the CIL'S.

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