

Testimony : Appropriations Committee , Friday February 27, 2015

David P. Morgana Jr. ,

Current Board Member of The Connecticut State Independent Living Council (SILC) , The Connecticut State Rehab Council (SRC), Advisory Board Member of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities (OPA), and Steering Committee member of the The Cross Disability Life Span Alliance.

Former Board member of Independence Unlimited (one of the five Centers for Independent Living)

My name is David Morgana, I am a currently a board member of the the Connecticut State Independent Living Council (SILC), The Connecticut State Rehab Council (SRC) , Advisory Board Member of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities (OPA), as well as a Steering Committee member of the Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance. I'm also a former board member of Independence Unlimited, which is one of the five Centers for Independent Living.

I am in absolute opposition to the Governors proposed budget cuts that would eliminate any funding from the five Centers for Independent Living.

The Proposed cuts of \$528,680.00 represents a 100% cut from the state budget. The elimination of these crucial funds would be a so dramatic,that the future sustainability of the five centers would be severally compromised.

The Five Centers for Independent Living are small independent nonprofits that operate with relatively small budgets and simply can not sustain such a loss in funding.

The Five Centers for Independent Living are strategic allies and partners for the State of Connecticut by providing essential service for thousands of people with disabilities. They provide information, resources and assistance for people with disabilities and their families, a few examples are: they help with transitioning people out of nursing homes, housing assistance, and pre-employment services.

The previously mentioned work that centers do are so important to people with disabilities and their families. The Centers are an invaluable resource not only to the disability community but key assets for the State of Connecticut and it's tax payers.

As an example: According to information provided to me by the CIL's : In 2014, with the help of the Centers for Independent Living(CIL's) 111 people were transitioned out of nursing homes, saving the state an estimated \$4,914,081.00 as well as preventing numerous people going into or back into institutions saving the state a minimum of an additional \$540,015.00. Thats a total of \$5,454,096.00. This represents more than TEN TIMES the amount in savings to Connecticut Tax payers than was provided in funds to the Five Centers. In my opinion The state of Connecticut should be providing more funding for theses centers not eliminating it. Providing funding for the Centers is a great investment, your not just saving Connecticut money but you're investing in the future of people with disabilities.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, a thing to be celebrated and remembered. This years budget is a staunch reminder that the battle is not over , the fight still goes on to protect the rights of people with disabilities, the essential services needed to ensure that we are able to live life to the fullest, to be included in in all aspects of society and provided a hand up not a hand out so that the disability community can live as independently as possible and pursue the American Dream. Do not allow Connecticut to slip backwards in this pursuit , let Connecticut be known for championing the causes of the disability community not turning your back on us.

When considering this years budget I humbly urge the Legislature to fully fund the the 5 Centers for Independent Living and seriously consider the short and long term effects of the other numerous proposed cuts to Social Services and essential programs that effect the disability community and their families.

Sincerely,
David P. Morgana Jr.