

TESTIMONY OF CANDACE LOW BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS SUB COMMITTEE  
Department of Rehabilitative Services Budget (DORS)  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, FEBRUARY 27, 2015

Good evening, members of the committee. My name is Candace Low, Executive Director of Independence Unlimited, a Center for Independent Living located in Harford. I am here tonight to ask that you restore funding for independent living centers (ILCs) in the state budget for core services that include advocacy, peer counseling, skills training, information and referral services and a wide variety of non-core services that address individual needs. The ILCs serve all disabilities and all ages as well as family members of people with disabilities. The state currently funds five CIL's for \$519,572 (\$103,914 per CIL). In the past fiscal year alone, the five ILC's saved the state a minimum of \$5,454,096. The loss of state dollars will seriously compromise the ability of CT CIL's at a time when people with disabilities will need the help of the Centers most. The ILC's are a part of the safety net for people with disabilities.

The ILC's need state funding to leverage for other funding and provide infrastructure (rent, utilities, telephones, administrative support) as well as staff for core services that support state grants such as:

- Money Follows the Person (MFP)
- Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)
- Partnerships with DORS to provide pre-vocational services

The above grants are designed to reduce state Medicaid costs and increase the independence of the citizens of Connecticut. None of the grants fully fund the activities required. The CIL's provide a vast array of services that helps people stay in the community and saves the state money.

I am asking that the committee strongly consider the wisdom of any proposal that increases the probability of nursing facility admissions, adds to the ranks of "safety net" consumers, perpetuates chronic underemployment, and prevents successful community living for individuals with disabilities. Removing the state funding for Connecticut's five Independent Living Centers the Governor's budget does that. The Independent Living Centers are integral partners to many of the state's current Medicaid Rebalancing Efforts including Money Follows the Person. Furthermore, the Centers have provided the peer support and skills training necessary for the long-term success of individuals transitioned under MFP. The Centers are founding partners in the statewide Aging and Disability Resource Center movement and by their presence ensure full cooperation and collaboration of agencies and programs across the lifespan. One would not be wrong to question Connecticut's commitment to the concepts of *Aging in Place* and *Livable Communities* if the Independent Living Centers are completely eliminated from the state's budget.

During the 2014, Independence Unlimited has:

- Increased the number of people with disabilities served with long term services by 22% over the previous year (14% of those served have mental illness, 23% have multiple disabilities)
- Provided training and technical assistance to thousands of people including staff of state agencies, transportation workers, service providers, hospitals, etc.
- Transitioned 70 people from institutions into community based settings and provided support so they can stay in the community saving the state millions of dollars

Independence Unlimited has helped remove barriers to obtaining housing, assistive technology, health care, transportation and many other services. We are one of the few agencies that

provide training and technical assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act and other disability legislation.

The work done by Independence Unlimited and our sister centers demonstrates the abilities of people with disabilities to perform vital services of the state and federal governments. We are unique. We are people with disabilities helping people with disabilities. Who can better understand the issues of the populations we serve? State support of the Independent Living Centers supports the independent living philosophy so people with disabilities can enjoy the same civil rights as others and live in the community. State support is investing in people; it is the right thing to do. Thank you for your time.

Candace Low, Executive Director  
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# Don't Eliminate Funding for CENTERS for INDEPENDENT LIVING

Impact of Governor's Budget:

- loss of federal funding due to loss of State match;
- loss of jobs for people with disabilities;
- Aging & Disability Resource Center Network in jeopardy;
- citizens in some regions of CT will no longer receive services.
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In 2014, CILs transitioned 111 individuals out of nursing facilities - saving the State a minimum of \$4,914,081.

CILs also prevented the imminent institutionalization of many individuals - saving the State a minimum of \$540,015.

**CILs saved the State \$5,454,096 in 2014. This is TEN times the funding we receive from the State**



- Served over 12,000 with disability related information & referral services;
- Assisted 1,471 people with disabilities with advocacy, independent living skills training, peer counseling, youth & educational, and other services;
- Assisted 340 people with disabilities to obtain & maintain employment;
- Assisted 468 people with disabilities to obtain & maintain affordable & accessible housing;
- Enabled 139 people with disabilities to obtain transportation, and,
- Helped 600 to continue living independently in the community.

## **CONNECTICUT'S CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING**

### **Eastern CT:**

Disabilities Network of Eastern Connecticut (DNEC)  
19 Ohio Avenue  
Norwich, CT 06360  
860-823-1898 (V/Video Phone); Fax: 860-886-2316  
Cathy Ferry, Executive Director ([ferrycathy@yahoo.com](mailto:ferrycathy@yahoo.com))

### **Southwestern CT/Fairfield County:**

Access Independence (AI)  
80 Ferry Boulevard, Suite 205  
Stratford, CT 06615  
203-378-6977 (V); Fax: 203-375-2748  
Charles Conway, Executive Director ([cconway@accessinct.org](mailto:cconway@accessinct.org))

### **Northwestern CT:**

Independence Northwest (IN)  
1183 New Haven Road, Suite 200  
Naugatuck, CT 06770  
203-729-3299 (V); Video Phone 203-490-0358; Fax: 203-729-2839  
[info@indnw.org](mailto:info@indnw.org)  
Eileen Healy, Executive Director ([eileen.healy@indnw.org](mailto:eileen.healy@indnw.org))

### **Greater Hartford/North Central CT:**

Independence Unlimited (IU)  
151 New Park Avenue, Suite D  
Hartford, CT 06106  
860-523-5021 (V/TTY); Fax: 860-523-5603  
[contactus@independenceunlimited.org](mailto:contactus@independenceunlimited.org)  
Candace Low, Executive Director ([clow@independenceunlimited.org](mailto:clow@independenceunlimited.org))

### **Greater New Haven/Middlesex County:**

Center for Disability Rights (CDR)  
764 B Campbell Avenue  
West Haven, CT 06516  
203-934-7077 (V); 203-934-7078 (Fax)  
[info@cdr-ct.org](mailto:info@cdr-ct.org)  
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