

## **DON'T ELIMINATE FUNDING FOR CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING**

My name is Joseph Shortt. I'm a Southbury resident and I'm a quadriplegic, due to a spinal cord injury in 2002. After my accident, I relied heavily on Centers for Independent Living for assistance to overcome everyday challenges, for guidance from individuals with similar disabilities, and to become more independent. Once I earned a Bachelors and Masters of Social Work, The Bureau of Rehabilitation Service setup an internship for me at one of the five Centers for Independent Living where I was eventually hired full time as an Independent Living Advocate.

As an Independent living Advocate, I am now able to pass on the knowledge that I have acquired to individuals who are in the same position I was once in. Individuals who don't know where to turn for assistance, who need peer counseling, independent living skills, and in many cases an advocate. I understand there are hard decisions to make considering the fiscal crisis the state's in, but the services offered by Centers for Independent Living are Crucial for the well being of individuals living with a disability and they will be impacted tremendously by the Governor's proposed budget cut.

Centers for Independent Living offer essential services to children, adults, and elders with disabilities. Each center provides four core services to anyone with a disability. They are the first place to go to get accurate, unbiased information on all aspects of life related to aging or living with a disability. In 2015, CT's Centers for Independent Living provided:

- Over 17,000 contacts for disability related information & referral services; and
  - Assisted over 2500 individuals with independent living skills training, peer counseling, advocacy, youth & educational services, among other vital services such as housing, employment, transition, and transportation.

There are numerous additional services and programs that Centers for Independent Living offer beyond their five core services, such as the Money Follows the Person program. Money Follows the Person allows individuals living in nursing homes to transition back into their community, so they can live independently. In 2015 Centers for Independent Living transitioned 233 individuals out of nursing facilities, SAVING the State over \$10 Million dollars, which is nearly 20 times the annual state funding for Centers for Independent Living. In addition, Centers for Independent Living prevented 422 disabled individuals from entering costly nursing facilities.

**Please restore full funding for the Centers for Independent Living.** Otherwise there will be a severe reduction of vital independent living services across the state; an increase of institutional placement for individuals with disabilities; and the loss of jobs for numerous individuals with disabilities.

Thank you for your valuable time.

Joseph Shortt  
Southbury, CT

