

Testimony
Daria Smith, Executive Director, CT State Independent Living Council
Appropriations Committee
Thursday, February 11, 2016

My name is Daria Smith and I'm the Executive Director of the Connecticut State Independent Living Council. I oppose the Governor's budget proposal to eliminate funding (\$497,290) for the five Centers for Independent Living.

The Centers for Independent Living are the foundation of independent living services for people with disabilities in CT. Eliminating the centers from the budget is an affront to people with disabilities at a time when other major human services are also being cut. In 2015, the Centers provided:

- **Over 17,000 information and referral contacts;**
- **2,533 people with disabilities with independent living skills training, peer counseling, advocacy, youth & educational services, among other vital programs;**
- **128 people with disabilities with services to obtain & maintain employment;**
- **558 people with disabilities with services to obtain & maintain affordable and accessible housing;**
- **284 people with disabilities with services to obtain transportation; and**
- **422 people with disabilities received services that prevented institutionalization.**

Connecticut's Centers for Independent Living are central and key partners in programs and initiatives like Money Follows the Person, Community Choices, Youth Transition services, and Pre-Vocational opportunities, to name a few. **A 100% reduction in the state funds has a significant and detrimental ripple effect.** Not

only will the cuts impact services to hundreds of people with disabilities annually, it will also significantly limit the ability to fully implement other programs and services directly related to nursing home transition, aging and disability resources, housing assistance, pre-employment services, youth transition and transportation, all of which ultimately save the state money and assist people with disabilities to fully participate in the community, work force and life.

I urge the Legislature to fully restore full funding for the Centers for Independent Living so that people with disabilities can continue to live, work and thrive independently.