

Cathy Ferry <ferrycathy@yahoo.com>

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AppTestimony

Appropriations Committee Testimony Department of Rehabilitation Services State Budget

Dear Senator Bye and Representative Walker,

My name is Cathy Ferry. I live in Colchester, CT. I am the Executive Director of the Disabilities Network of Eastern CT (DNEC), the VicePresident of the CT Association of Centers for Independent Living, (CACIL), and a member of the State Independent Living Council (SILC).

I regret that I am unable to attend the Appropriations Committee hearing in person to testify on the Governor's proposed budget for the Department of Rehabilitation Services. A health condition is making it impossible for me to attend in person.

To be brief and to the point, I urge you to restore the funding for the five Centers for Independent Living.

We all understand that the state faces an almost impossible fiscal crisis. We all know that we cannot continue to run agencies and fund programs in the manner that we have in the past. It is time for both difficult decisions and significant changes. I do not envy your jobs - mine is hard enough!

I would suggest to you that Centers for Independent Living are a working model of the future we must create and improve. We are not for profit, independent centers, run for and by persons with disabilities. We do amazing things, one consumer at a time, with very little state funding. We leverage federal, corporate and private donations. We are imbedded in our local communities. We serve persons of any age, with any disability. We are actual working examples of one stop shopping and person centered planning, long before the terms became buzz words in long range plans. Our staff are living, breathing, successful peer models of persons with disabilities living and working the lives that they have chosen.

What is more, we have saved the state over \$10.3 million dollars in 2015 by transitioning 233 individuals out of nursing homes and into their own places of living in the community, together with effective, but cheaper wrap around services. In addition, we prevented 422 individuals from entering nursing homes, thereby saving an estimated \$1million dollars more.

We provided over 17,000 contacts with disability related information and referral services; 2,533 people with disabilities received independent living skills training, peer counseling, advocacy, youth and educational services. Employment was found for 128 persons with

disabilities; 558 people with disabilities were able to find affordable, accessible housing; 284 received help with transportation, and 422 people with disabilities received services that prevented them from being institutionalized.

Speaking for the consumers, staff and board of the Disabilities Network of Eastern CT, my little Center for Independent Living in eastern CT, I urge you to see the value we provide to the state and to restore our funding.

Thank you.