

Testimony of Scott M. Robbins
Appropriations Sub-Committee Public Hearing February 11, 2016
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Restore Funding to CTs Independent Living Centers.

I have worked at two independent living centers in Connecticut for over twenty years. Independent living Centers serve persons with all types of disabilities and of all ages. I have first hand knowledge of the valuable services that CT's five independent living centers provide to people with disabilities and their families in our state. The centers, which are staffed by qualified persons with disabilities, provide information and referral to thousands of individuals each year, peer counseling, independent living skill training, institutional transition back to the community, youth transition to school and work, and advocacy.

The independent living centers provide a single point of entry into disability services, and are a key transition site under the Money Follows the Person (MFP) state initiative; moving people out of nursing homes back into the community. Not only is transitioning elders and people with disabilities back to the community from nursing facilities the right thing to do, it also saves the state millions of dollars through the enhanced Medicaid match and in institutional care. Centers receive limited federal funding, however the funding is to provide **specific** disability services. Without the state funding (through the Department of Rehabilitation Services) the centers would lose their infrastructure that subsidizes MFP, Aging & Disability Resource Centers, Ticket to Work and other cost saving programs. **The relatively small investment from the state \$528,680.00 reaps huge cost saving rewards.** In 2015 the centers for independent living transitioned 233 individuals out of nursing facilities, saving the state over 10.3 million dollars, in addition the centers for independent living prevented 422 individuals from entering nursing facilities saving an estimated minimum of 1 million dollars.

Consumers of the centers services are assisted to achieve their goals of self-sufficiency and autonomy, which results in state savings through reduced reliance on state and federal entitlement programs. Many consumers return to work, go back to school, obtain employment for the first time, secure affordable housing and learn the skills necessary to lead independent and fulfilling lives in the community.

The unintended result of eliminating the centers from the budget will be increased Medicaid and Unemployment Compensation costs, even greater reliance on costly state funded services and fewer people maximizing their independence. Many people with disabilities will lose their jobs, hundreds of people with physical and psychiatric disabilities will be unable to receive vital support services and many will be stuck in costly institutional settings.

The consequences of eliminating state funding for Independent Living Centers will increase state expenses far beyond the cost savings, and ultimately, it hurts Connecticut's children, adults and elders with disabilities.

Submitted by:

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