

Dear Senator Bye and Representative Walker,

My name is Katherine Pellerin and I live in Lebanon. I am the Board President for the Disabilities Network of Eastern CT, one of the five Centers for Independent living, and Board President for the State Independent Living Council. I am a proud, lifelong resident of this fine state, always honored to call CT my home.

The budget deficit that CT is facing is not only daunting in size but overwhelming in scope. I read the numbers; I understand the need to spend only that which we have and living "within" our means. I'm a home owner and deal with a budget, if only on the minuscule level of one household. I look at the numbers and see just that...cold, hard facts; marks on a white paper. Then I start thinking about the lives behind the numbers, the people who will suffer when those numbers are reduced – when marks on a paper will show how much has been done to balance a budget. The Centers for Independent Living represent the breathing, needing lives that those "marks" stand for. Once the money, the marks on the page, are reduced through cuts to the Centers, those lives will be hurt beyond measure. And – the State of CT will eventually be putting out more money to make up for what the Centers can no longer take care of due to the cutting of the cold, hard numbers. I implore you to think of the people, the lives those budget numbers represent. Without the funding to the Centers for Independent Living, there will be innumerable programs and services lost.

Some facts:

1. The state has saved 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 with the necessary services to maintain their independence;
2. 422 individuals did not go into nursing homes, thereby saving an estimated one million dollars more;
3. Over 17,000 were contacted with disability related information and referral services;
4. 2,533 people with disabilities received independent living skills training, peer counseling, advocacy, youth and educational services.
5. Employment was found for 128 persons with disabilities;
6. 558 people with disabilities were able to find affordable, accessible housing;
7. 284 received help with transportation, and
8. 422 people with disabilities received services that prevented them from being institutionalized.

These numbers indicate success; they indicate a future for many people; they indicate independence.

Please – restore our funding. Let the numbers reflect the pride and values for which Connecticut is famous.

Thank you.