My name is Eileen Healy. I live in Woodbury. I’m here tonight to urge you to support funding for Independent Living Centers (ILCs) at a minimum of $529,000. The Governor has proposed $312,725 and this funding supports all FIVE of Connecticut’s Independent Living Centers.

The ILCs provide essential services for people with all types of disabilities and of all ages. We are people with disabilities providing assistance to other people with disabilities, and we are unique because we have life experiences that provide support and real life “how-tos,” that are frequently low cost solutions to obstacles people with disabilities encounter daily. We provide peer mentoring, information & referral, skills training, youth transition and transition from nursing facilities back to community living, plus many other services including vocational services, assistive technology, aging in place, services to veterans and people living with HIV and AIDS. Our services are individualized to the needs of the person and their goals. We assist people to obtain access to transportation, housing, education, employment, as well as many other activities that result in community-based independent living and self-sufficiency. State Independent Living dollars ensure that our services are free and available throughout the state, reducing yet another barrier to achieving Independent Living.

However, because of funding reductions in the last several years, we cut back on the towns we serve, instituted waiting lists, laid-off staff and reduced salaries as well. In order for the ILCs to assist people with disabilities across the state, we must be funded at a minimum of $529K. According to an independent study conducted by the Governor-appointed CT State Independent Living Council, to adequately serve the State of CT the ILCs should be funded at $5.5M. While that amount may be unrealistic in our current fiscal crisis, it is an amount to strive towards, especially when considering that the ILCs annually transition over 200 people with disabilities, including elders, out of costly nursing facilities, saving the state over $10M every year. Without the state IL funding we can’t achieve these savings and do even more.

Also, I ask you to consider funding services for the deaf and hard of hearing community through the ILCs. We are a logical and local choice for providing support services that are currently so lacking since the elimination of the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired. And we have experience providing these services.

I urge you to fund the ILCs at a minimum of $529K. Thank you for your time and attention.

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