Testimony of Scott M. Robbins
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
March 5, 2019

Restore Full Funding to CT’s 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 are non-residential and 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 for Independent Living 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 of $528,680.00 (divided equally among the five centers) reaps huge cost saving rewards.** In 2018 the centers for independent living provided the following services:

- **17,000** – Individuals who received information and referral services on disability related topics. *(FY17)*
- **233** – Transitioned out of nursing facilities through MFP, **saving the state more than $10.3 million**, while improving the quality of life for those individuals. *(FY17)*
- **2,533** – Received independent living skills training, peer counseling, advocacy, youth & educational services. *(FY17)*
- **422** – Received services that prevented need for costly emergency health, transportation and residential supports *(FY17).*
- **558** – Helped to get and keep affordable, accessible housing. *(FY17)*
- **128** – Received support services to get and keep jobs. *(FY17)*
- **737** – Individuals able to stay in their homes through funding for structural modifications, security deposits, first month rent, personal assistance & transportation. *(Since 2011)*

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 reduced funding for 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 reduced state funding for Independent Living Centers, and the loss of the state’s Deaf Services program will increase state expenses far beyond the cost savings, and ultimately, it hurts Connecticut’s children, adults and elders with disabilities. I urge the committee to restore the center’s funding to $528,680.00

Submitted by:

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