



SERVICES FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING, INC.

Testimony of Katherine Foley, Executive Director
Services for Independent Living (SIL)
House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
March 13, 2017

Dear Chairman Romanchuck and Ranking Minority Member Sykes:

I am writing on behalf of Services for Independent Living (SIL), one of Ohio's twelve Centers for Independent Living (CIL). SIL is a Center for Independent Living located in Cuyahoga County whose primary service area is Cuyahoga, Lake and Geauga counties. As a Center, we strive to help individuals with disabilities gain access to accurate information to make meaningful life decisions, connect with community resources and provide supports and independent living skills needed to be able to live and participate in community life. As advocates, we try to address systemic barriers impacting the lives of our constituents and their respective families. I see the impact our services and supports make in the lives of individuals with disabilities on a daily basis.

The last U.S. Census shows that individuals with disabilities comprise 20% of the population. Disability issues touch the majority of the population whether it is a spouse, parent or child having a disability. It could be a neighbor who had a stroke, a dear friend with multiple sclerosis or co-worker who is paralyzed due to an auto accident. Disabilities may be visible or invisible. No one is immune. Disabilities occur regardless of age, religion or socio-economic levels.

Our vision is that of a society which is accessible to all. Accessibility is often viewed as something you can see such ramps for persons using wheelchairs, use of sign language interpreters and vans/buses with wheelchair lifts. It is much more than that. It is having the skills, information and emotional supports to live in the community. One of the most prevalent barriers to access is attitude and lack of meaningful information. Oftentimes, individuals with disabilities are viewed as those needing to be taken care of. They are devalued and seen as a burden. The reality is that the people we work with want to be self-sufficient. They want to work and take part in family/community life. They just need help getting to that point.

Centers for Independent Living are unique in that the majority of our staff and Board of Directors are persons with disabilities. Who better to understand the issues faced by consumers than another person with a disability? Peer support and guidance is one of SIL's most valuable supports. We recently received a call from a mother whose adult son had autism and did not deal well with his disability. He became withdrawn. He was paired with a Peer Support mentor who had been involved in an accident, leaving paralyzed from the neck down. As they got to know each other, the mentor was able to help the young man come to terms with his disability and begin engaging with family and friends. This may not

sound like much, but it means that he is now able to be in the community and possible work at some point because he is now more self-confident and knowledgeable about the impact of his disability.

In addition to peer support, we also teach skills needed to live independently (ie: budgeting, household maintenance, cooking, laundry, effective decision making and problem solving, safety in the community and self-advocacy), help individuals transition from nursing home back into their communities, youth and young adult transition, and access to accurate information.

Program growth is designed to address unmet needs. For example, Services for Independent Living's newest program is an accessible transportation program which is able to cross county lines between Lake, Geauga and Cuyahoga counties. This program allows people to get to work, doctor's appointments, go grocery shopping, attend family functions and move around their communities.

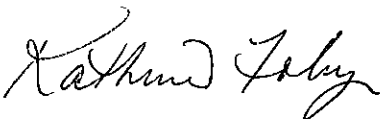
Other programs developed to meet unmet needs are an Equipment Program and services targeted to at-risk young adults with disabilities who have transitioned from school and foster-care systems and are floundering. We provide a safety net and a secure presence in their lives, while teaching independent living skills needed to maintain their jobs and/or apartments.

Each of the programs increase a person's ability to be as independent as possible, most often to a lesser financial burden on the state. For example, SIL has transitioned nearly 300 individuals from costly nursing homes to the community. The majority of CIL's in Ohio offer this program which saves Ohio millions of dollars and improves the lives of those who transition. All this is done on minimal dollars, considering the impact and number of people served.

We are respectfully asking that the CIL line item (415520) be reinstated. CIL's used to receive GRF funding directly. We are also asking for an increase of \$1.7 million which will bring Ohio in line with other states in our region. Ohio ranks at the bottom in our region, with regards to the amount of state funding to CIL's. Not only will the extra funding bring us in line with other states in our region, it will open the doors to leverage federal funding at rates between \$3.69 and \$9.00 for every state dollar. This makes good fiscal sense while creating opportunities to provide critically needed services for persons with disabilities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katherine Foley". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Katherine Foley
Executive Director

February 27, 2017

Ramona Ganesh
Operations Manager
Transportation for Independent Living
Services for Independent Living
26250 Euclid Avenue – Suite 801
Euclid, Ohio 44132

RE: Letter of appreciation

Dear Ramona,

The purpose of this letter is to express my appreciation for the services performed by your TRANSPORTATION TEAM in the transportation of my mother to her three times per week dialysis treatment.

My mother is wheel chair restricted and must have kidney dialysis treatment three times a week to survive. Your team, without fail, has since August 2016 picked up my mother on time both in the morning and afternoon, no matter the weather or traffic. Your dispatch team, your drivers and you have taken care of my mother with great class at all times. The drivers, the vans and the verbal exchange with both my mother and I has been exceptional.

I was told back in August that my mother would be in good hands and that I could count on the team. THE TEAM has done a GREAT JOB. For this, I am sincerely appreciative, for past services performed and continued services to be performed.

Keep up the GREAT JOB --- THANK YOU!

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Kathy Foley

From: Lisa Marn
Sent: Sunday, March 12, 2017 4:18 PM
To: Kathy Foley
Subject: Fwd: letter

Sent from my Verizon 4G LTE Droid

----- Forwarded message -----

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Mar 12, 2017 4:15 PM
Subject: letter
To: Lisa Marn <lmarn@sil-oh.org>
Cc:

who who this may concerned

What is help me in a tremendous way because without it I wouldn't be where I am today such as living on my own because before I knew about the program or the ISI services program I would still be living at home with my mom and also it has made me more independent because I'm able to cook food on my own in the microwave I still need assistance but I'm able to do more physical things on my own with only a little bit of assistance so your program has done a lot for me over the years and I hope it will continue to help me furthermore over the past couple more in my life thanks for all you guys do I'm very grateful for your and helping all kinds of people with all kinds of disability become successful and without your help we wouldn't be where we are today so thank you for helping us be successful it really means a lot.

Sincerely [REDACTED]

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android