

Written testimony of Kevin Flynn, Cincinnati, Member of the Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council
to the Health and Human Services Subcommittee, Finance Committee, Ohio House of Representatives
April 10, 2019

Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member West, Honorable Members of the Committee:

I appear before you today asking for your support for \$1,800,000 for the 12 independent living centers that exist across the state.

You have a difficult job. I understand that there are numerous requests relative to the budget, all of them worthy, and not enough revenue to support these requests. I experienced much the same thing on a smaller scale, when I served as a Councilman for the City of Cincinnati. After leaving City Council, I joined the Center for Independent Living Options Board in Cincinnati and soon thereafter was appointed by Governor Kasich to the Statewide Independent Living Council. I believe in the mission of the Centers for Independent Living. Just because life has put up a barrier, it doesn't mean that you have to stop living. In fact, with the assistance of others and working together, we can and must knock those barriers over.

Funding these Independent Living organizations in your communities throughout Ohio give people the tools to go to work. Nothing is easy when you have a disability. Whether it is transportation, or job training, or even having a place to live, it is harder with a disability. We don't want a hand out, just level the playing field a little, so that we can compete on a fair basis with others.

Independent living isn't a theory to me. 17 years ago, I was involved in a catastrophic automobile accident that left me with quadriplegia. I was one of the lucky ones. My family and community have allowed me to remain a productive member of our society. I am blessed. I have a great support network: A fantastic wife, three great kids, and a network of friends, professional colleagues, and even strangers that have enabled me to get back to living. Not everyone with a physical or developmental challenge has the same people behind them. I know that I could not be here today if it were not for all of the many, many people that have helped me get here. The CILs provide help to the many people who don't have the support system I have.

Before my accident, I was a husband and a father of three children, a real estate lawyer, and a professor at the University of Cincinnati. After my accident, I remain: a husband and a father of three, now grown, children; a real estate lawyer; and a professor at the University of Cincinnati.

I live to try to pay back the tremendous opportunities in life that I have been given. Please help the Centers for Independent Living help other Ohioans to attain independence, reach for their opportunities, and contribute to making our great state even greater. Please support this proposal. Thank you.

Kevin R. Flynn
Of Counsel
Griffin Fletcher & Herndon
3500 Red Bank Road
Cincinnati, OHIO 45227
(513) 421-1313

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