

Written testimony of Kevin Flynn, Cincinnati, Chairperson of the Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council to the Senate Health Subcommittee of the Senate Finance Committee, Ohio House May 10, 2023

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney and Honorable Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I submit this today asking for your support for a total of \$1,500,000 annually for line item 415-511 for the Centers for Independent Living. House Bill 33, as amended, provides \$752,000 annually between appropriations 415511 and 415402 and a one-time appropriation of pass-through dollars from the Federal government for ramps of home modifications and ramps. The House got us halfway to where we need to be. We are extremely grateful for our inclusion in the House markup of the upcoming Budget. If we can bring the final Budgeted appropriations up to an annual appropriation of \$1,500,000, the Independent Living Centers will be able to help so many more Ohioans avoid institutionalization and warehousing of persons and allow Persons with Disabilities to maximize their potential.

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 believe in the mission of the Centers for Independent Living. Just because life puts up barriers, with your help, the assistance of all the great non-profits around our state, and all of us working together, we can and must eliminate barriers and Allow Persons with Disabilities to lead full lives.

Funding Independent Living Centers 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. Increasing this funding will allow the Centers to reach more unserved and underserved persons with disabilities throughout Ohio. This funding is an investment which will reduce reliance by individuals on government aid programs and increase state tax revenue as more people with disabilities get living wage paying jobs.

Independent living isn't a theory to me. 21 years ago (my family and I celebrated my 'Life Day' – the Day of my automobile accident – on February 22, 2002, I was involved in a catastrophic automobile accident that left me with quadriplegia. I am one of the lucky ones 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. We need your help to aid the CILs in providing help to the many people who don't have the support system I have.

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.

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