



Thank you Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell and Committee Members for the opportunity to talk with you today about the Centers for Independent Living in Ohio.

My name is Jeremy Morris, I am the Executive Director of the Access Center for Independent Living in Dayton, Ohio serving Montgomery, Greene, Clark and Preble Counties. The Access Center has been serving our community since 1984, and in that time served thousands in their goals to increase their independence. As a CIL, we believe in increased opportunity for a fully inclusive society. The CILs are committed to the empowerment of people with disabilities, all disabilities, and all ages.

Some highlights of the Access Center from our 2016 operating year are:

- The transitioning of 12 individuals out of nursing homes into less restrictive environments, over 250 individuals since 2007.
- Providing over 4,400 individual services to people
- Providing over 600 services through our Recycled Equipment Donated for Independence Program
- Providing Disability Awareness Training to nearly 150 people through our Think This is Easy? Training Program.
- Spending over 900 hours in the community to promote inclusion, access, and education

One of the individuals we assisted was Mike. He had worked for years in heavy construction until 2012, when he was home visiting family and he felt something strange. Two hours later he was in the hospital after having a stroke. Mike spent three and a half years in a nursing home. Upon beginning to work with the Access Center, Mike said he “could finally see the light at the end of the tunnel.” Although he had a lot of fear in returning to the community, Mike said staff at the Access Center made him believe that he could do it. Upon returning to the community, he was having difficulties with his home health services. The Access Center assisted to teach this individual what his rights are, and how to become a better advocate. He now control over his services and independence. Mike is a strong self-advocate that continues to expand his involvement in the community, something he was unsure he would have again.

Working with a CIL the consumer is in control of the direction of their services and the goals they wish to achieve in maximizing independence in the community. The CILs fill the gaps of other services because we look at all facets of life, not just employment, housing, or health care. We look at a holistic approach because if an individual can find employment, but has no stability in housing they will not be successful in their sustained employment.

The CILs fill a unique void in services that people with disabilities greatly need. Because of our ability to work across disabilities and ages we have partnered on projects with The Department of Medicaid in moving people out of nursing homes and installing temporary ramps. We have worked with the Department of Developmental Disabilities on youth engagement and empowerment. We have worked with Department of Aging on the Long-Term Services and Supports program coming in the fall, as well as being part of the beginning of MyCare Ohio, the Integrated Care Delivery System that created a Medicaid/Medicare managed care program. We continue to work with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities to further individuals with disabilities and create long-range goals.

There are few organizations able to have this range of collaboration and partnerships. And we could be doing more if the infrastructure of Independent Living was better supported. In comparison to other states, Ohio is lagging far behind in the investment to Independent Living for people with disabilities. Our neighboring state of Michigan has an estimated 1.3 million residents with disabilities and receives \$2.1 million in state support. This equates to approximately \$1.60

per person with disabilities for Independent Living Services. To compare, Ohio has 1.5 million residents with disabilities and in turn, the IL Program receives 250,000 of GRF, or approximately \$0.16 per person. This is well maximized by bringing in federal match dollars, but does not grant the support needed for a stable infrastructure of CILs to be able to meet the demand within our state and to meet the needs of the state agencies.

Thank you,



Jeremy Morris

Executive Director

Access Center for Independent Living