

## **Testimony – Finance Subcommittee on Health & Human Services**

Chairman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston and Members of the Finance Subcommittee:

My name is Melanie Hogan. I am the Executive Director of Linking Employment Abilities, and Potential (LEAP), a Center for Independent Living based in Cleveland, where I have worked for 28 years.

Designed and operated by individuals with disabilities, Centers for Independent Living provide the resources, supports and services that give people with disabilities the opportunity to live and work in their communities. We are not institutional or residential facilities.

While disability costs in Ohio's healthcare expenditures are over \$19 billion per year (as reported by the CDC), Ohio's investment in the Centers for Independent Living, to provide supportive and preventative services is the lowest, by far, in our region.

Centers support the work of The Department of Developmental Disabilities, The Department of Medicaid, the Department of Aging, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities and integrated health care entities which results in positive home and community-based outcomes for individuals with disabilities. This in turn produces significant cost-savings for Ohio.

**We respectfully request that the line item (415-511) for the Centers for Independent Living be increased to \$1,500,000 annually.**

Additional funding will improve the Centers' ability to deliver an increased level of independent living services to under-served and unserved persons with disabilities in a time of increased need, and to expand the availability of independent living services to more Ohioans throughout our existing service areas.

**Ultimately Ohio's investment in independent living services benefits all Ohioans through:**

- Increased Fiscal Responsibility and Decreased Dependence on Public Assistance: Centers provide required supports and services recognizing that disability benefits are offsets to the high costs of disability, rather than subsidies for the inability to work. We provide benefits assistance and analysis in order to support a person with a disability in understanding the relationship between their benefits and their employment goals.
- Increased Savings Through Community Based Living: Assisting persons who are able to transition from institutions back into the community settings of their choice generates savings for the state when people with disabilities utilize Home and Community Based Waiver services. It costs on average more than \$75,000 per year for a person to live in a semi-private nursing home room. A person can be provided IL services so he or she can live in the community, at an estimated cost of \$36,000 per year.

Over the last two years, nearly 200 individuals have been transitioned to the community, creating a cost-savings for the state of over \$10,400,000 in institutional care.

- Increased Employment and Tax Revenue: It takes a variety of services to address the needs and barriers experienced by persons with disabilities as they seek to be fully integrated, contributing members of society. Essential vocational rehabilitation services are augmented by independent living skills services, remedial and enrichment education and training, personal assistance services, accessible/affordable housing and transportation, access to assistive aids and devices, income supports and health care - all of these services are necessary so that individuals with significant disabilities can successfully live and work in the community.

**In summary, Independent Living is an Efficient Use of State Resources. Funding provided will:**

- Support the State's improved quality and cost savings agenda
- Help keep individuals out of nursing homes and institutions, by providing services that support safe and healthy living in their homes
- Help people with disabilities work competitively in the community by providing the necessary training and supports
- Help youth with disabilities transition to the world of work

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and for your thoughtful consideration of increasing the availability of the invaluable and extremely cost-effective services CILs provide.

Respectfully submitted,  
Melanie Hogan  
Executive Director  
Linking Employment, Abilities and Potential (LEAP)