



Ohio SILC

Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council

**Jeremy Morris, Ohio SILC
Interested Party Testimony on HB33
Senate Finance Committee
Thursday, May 25, 2023**

Chairman Dolan, Vice-Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for reviewing this testimony on HB33. My name is Jeremy Morris and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council (Ohio SILC).

The Ohio SILC is a State affiliated Council that promotes independence and inclusion for individuals with significant disabilities across the State of Ohio. As part of our work, we appreciate the opportunity to discuss legislation that impacts the community of persons with disabilities in Ohio and to be a resource to the General Assembly as they consider this budget and the impacts to individuals with disabilities across the state.

We are very appreciative of the House adding one million to a new line of Independent Living Supplement, but we are hoping to have a technical change to the language to better align with the purpose. Therefore, we support deleting that language and incorporating the additional funds into the current Center for Independent Living line item with funding for both years in the biennium.

Centers for Independent Living provide the resources, supports, and services that give people with disabilities the opportunity to live and work in their communities. Centers are non-residential, disability led organizations that are operated by and for people with all forms of disability.

- Centers for Independent Living help people with disabilities live more fulfilling and productive lives. Their services enable people with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in their communities, including employment, education, and social activities.
- Funding independent living services is a cost-effective way to prevent institutionalization. Institutional care for people with disabilities is typically much more expensive than community-based services, such as home-based support, personal care attendants, and transportation services. By investing in independent living services, we can keep people out of expensive and often inadequate institutional settings and assist them in returning to the community.
- Supporting Independent Living supports values of self-determination and individual responsibility. Independent living services provide people with disabilities with the tools and resources they need to make their own decisions about where and how they live, work, and participate in their communities. These services empower individuals with disabilities to take control of their lives, and to be self-sufficient.

Centers in Ohio are the lowest funded in our region, which prevents our network from fully serving individuals across Ohio. Additional funding for Centers for Independent Living will expand access to the resources and services that the Centers provide in a substantial way. The average state funding in our region is currently around \$2,600,000, while Ohio is at \$500,000. **The Centers are requesting that line item 415-511 be increased to \$1,500,000 annually.**

Promoting Independence, Empowerment, and Inclusion in Ohio.



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The reasons for additional funding for Centers include:

- To provide more and better services: With more funding, CILs can expand the range and quality of services they offer, such as providing more independent living skills training, offering more transportation options, and creating more job opportunities for people with disabilities.
- To reach more people: Many people with disabilities are not aware of the services that CILs provide. With more funding, CILs can expand their outreach efforts, reaching more people in their communities who may benefit from their services.
- To increase accessibility: Many CILs work to make their communities more accessible for people with disabilities. With more funding, they can continue to make improvements to buildings, transportation, and other infrastructure to increase accessibility and inclusion.
- To reduce healthcare costs: By helping people with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in their communities, CILs can reduce healthcare costs associated with institutionalization and other forms of dependence.

The Centers for Independent Living have proven to be a strong investment in the community. In the last four years, we were able to increase successful outcomes by over 50%, nearly doubling the number of new individuals served, and being responsive to the needs of the local communities. This has led to substantial impacts on the individuals we serve and the work we continue in your communities across the state.

Additionally, in the last two years, the Centers have worked to transition over 200 individuals into the community. This has created estimated cost savings of over \$10,000,000 for the State of Ohio. This substantial cost-saving has been increased because of your investment in Independent Living. We are confident that this can only become even greater in the coming years when we are able to expand our impact in our communities, reach new communities in Ohio, and become one of the strongest Independent Living Programs in the country.

Center for Independent Living funding enables individuals with disabilities to live in their homes with their families where they can work, attend school, worship, and participate in other community activities. CILs are hubs of disability information, resources, services, and advocacy. CILs are vital to the whole community.

We appreciate your continued support of the Independent Living Program, the disability community, and helping us make Ohio a better state for the nearly two million individuals with disabilities.

Respectfully,

Jeremy Morris
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Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council

Promoting Independence, Empowerment, and Inclusion in Ohio.

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