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# Life and Independence For Today

**Center for Independent Living**

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*a member of the PA Council on Independent Living, a consumer controlled state association of centers for independent living*

Representative Stanley Saylor,  
Republican Policy Committee Chair

Dear Representative Saylor,

Please let the following serve as my written testimony for the hearing with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and State Centers for Independent Living (CIL's) on September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

I am the Executive Director for Life and Independence for Today (LIFT), a state funded CIL in Saint Marys Pa. This is my second time as ED at LIFT. I was here for 17 years, including 10 as the Executive Director. I only have been back since May 24, 2010.

Although I have only been back for a short time I have witnessed many changes. Some of them with the way state CIL funding is handled these changes have put an enormous burden on our tiny CIL of 6 staff.

Examples of issues we have faced are; we had to break down salary position for each person in a position as apposed to just breaking down the salary for the position in the already approved budget. This was burdensome because with such a small staff everyone has to pitch in a little extra and we had some turnover in a few positions. This procedure was a huge unnecessary undertaking that used both time and resources they quite frankly we couldn't spare. As I said before we are very small but our service area covers arguably 6 of the most rural counties in the state, with a land mass of 5,091 square miles. Since most of our consumers can't come to us we must go to them. When our travel line item gets questioned it puts us in a very difficult position of not being able to provide services until the issue is cleared up. There have also been issues of red tape, receipts and justifications holding up the purchase of equipment, etc. I was also told that a promotion of a staff person would not be approved until the start of the new fiscal year. The most recent thing I have issues with is all the state funded CIL's where highly encouraged to attend a financial training. It was so important that a state organization asked to use state funds to reimburse state CIL's for expenses related to attending the training through them. Then at the last minute they were told they were not allowed to use these funds for this purpose! This put small CIL's such as ours in a real bind! Myself and a staff member ended up canceling our hotel rooms and just attended the second day and we still had to pay \$106.00 for meal, and as I said again and again we just don't have the funding to spend on these type of thing just because what appeared to be a last minute change of heart.

All I really would like to see is that all CIL are treated with the same rules and that there is no need to set up so many obstacles when things have worked well for so long.

Thank you for your time and attention to this vital matter!  
Respectfully Robert A. Mecca, LIFT Executive Director

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