

**Testimony before the Republican Policy Committee  
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10:00 am**

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A Center for Independent Living (CIL)  
(DEC)**

Good morning Representative Saylor and members of the House Republican Policy Committee.

Thank you for holding this hearing today on an issue critical to the disability community in Pennsylvania.

My name is Deborah J. Stumpf, and I am Programs Coordinator for DEC, the Disability Empowerment Center serving Lancaster and Lebanon Counties.

Unlike **State CILs**, from whom you heard previously this morning, DEC is a **federally** funded CIL. I will explain some differences between the two but first, I would like to make some comments and observations.

1. CILs are well aware that State and Federal funding is limited. While it has **always been so**, the national economy since 2008 has created a financial crisis for our Country and States...and **Pennsylvania is no exception**.

Thus, while (1) CILs have always been frugal with the limited funds they have received, **whether state... or federal**; and (2) while CILs have made dramatic positive changes in the “quality of life” of consumers in the disability community (**your constituents**) with these limited funds; it is even more important that CILs continue to do so today! We must use every dollar wisely.

For the record we have; do now; and **will continue to do so!**

2. When you, the **Pennsylvania Legislature**, created CILs, **CILs** were to **promote and practice**, the **independent living philosophy** including:
  - **Consumer control** of the CILs, regarding decision making, service delivery, management, equal access, strategic planning, and more.
3. Even the enabling legislation you passed to establish CILs, required state CILs to **practice sound fiscal management**, including having **annual independent audits prepared...which as you heard previously, CILs do!**

**In addition.....Rider B to the State CIL grant contract also requires:**

- Competitive bids from 3 vendors for purchases over \$3,000
  - Maintenance of accounting records for the grant... **separate and apart** from general business records
  - Access to same **at all times** for *inspection, audit, or reproduction...* by the Secretary of L & I or authorized representatives or the Auditor General.
4. The Legislature in the enabling legislation, also wanted CIL services to consumers to be provided by “a coordinated network of **consumer-controlled** centers for independent living effectively reaching all 67 counties in the Commonwealth.”

Given **the urgency** of the **critical needs** of CIL consumers throughout the State, CILs all over Pennsylvania need *answers and approvals* from state officials **expeditiously! People’s lives sometimes may depend on it!**

**Instead... we hear that what they get from the OVR state office...are denials, delays, micro-management, and fiscal “nit-picking.”**

As I stated previously, CILs in Pennsylvania are presently, (1) well regulated by the state and (2) are fiscally responsible. They do an excellent job with the little funding they receive!

What they need is your...the Legislature's... help in forcing OVR to begin acting more **like a partner and advocate** in the delivery of services by CILs to the disability community in Pennsylvania.

Let me explain several **key differences** between a **federal CIL... and state CILs** in Pennsylvania.

- Federal CILs are **not encumbered** with the tasks of our sister state CILs under OVR.
- Federal CILs can simply draw down funds from their grant award account when needed.
- Federal CILs report to RSA **once a year**, in a detailed quite lengthy report. However we do not have to submit receipts as RSA accepts that we have audits performed annually.

A solution would be that perhaps OVR should follow the federal CIL model...for state CILs.

In closing I want you to know that DEC is the smallest and least funded CIL in Pennsylvania. As our funding continued to be cut, we had to reduce staff. We currently operate with two staff members, but could utilize several more employees.

DEC staff would not have time for the **strenuous and repetitive...reporting** that this state agency...OVR...is requesting of our sister CILs in Pennsylvania. Having to comply with this request, would mean that **precious time and limited resources** would be taken away from the really important work we at centers are so passionate about. Our missions all tend to come down to one concept; "Assisting people with disabilities to become independent, thriving, happy, often taxpaying individuals; as they either remain or integrate into our communities across the Commonwealth".

Take this service and that ability away, and CILs will begin to decline. Then who will do the **important work that we proudly and enthusiastically accomplish every day for people with disabilities?** Will state government step in and provide it?

I think we all know the answer to that!

If time permitted, there are countless stories I could tell you about individuals with disabilities whose lives have drastically changed because of the assistance of a center for independent living. **That is what this is all about!**

Reporting we understand... must be done; there is no question about it. There must be accountability. It **must not** however, be so burdensome to the point of occupying so much time that the mission, the vision, and the purpose of CILs, **is in jeopardy**, or suffers to the point of their not being able to serve the people they are contracted and dedicated to serving.

**Thank you** for the opportunity to share my views with you today!