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### **Ways & Means Testimony**

March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023

Good Morning Members of the Ways & Means Committee!

My name is Mara Romero. I live and work in Portland, Oregon. I am a professional with a disability who is honored to serve the community as lead housing advocate for Independent Living Resources (ILR). I am here to petition this committee to **increase funds by \$2.6 million in your budget process for Oregon's seven Centers for Independent Living (CILs)**. CILs are community-based organizations that are designed and operated by people with disabilities. We are requesting these funds to implement much needed Pay Equity for our peer-based disability services at CILs across Oregon. There has not been a meaningful increase in CIL state general funding for 10 years!

CIL focus is on promoting dignity, choice, and building trust with our community. Increasing our funding will send a powerful message about the importance of CILs in the disability services continuum. It will also allow us to better recruit and retain these uniquely qualified employees. We request that you embrace and fund the principles of the CIL Pay Equity Policy Option Package (POP) that was a part of the DHS budgeting process. This increase in funding was vetted and approved by DHS, but was not included in the new governor's budget.

### **CILs Offer Important Housing Supports for People with Disabilities**

I am also here to share with you the importance of peer-based housing services provided by independent living specialists like me at CILs across Oregon. Finding **affordable** and **accessible housing** has become increasingly difficult and presents a unique challenge to those with disabilities trying to stay and thrive in their community. CILs have responded with a deepening commitment to a combination of individualized direct services and systems-level advocacy. On the Individualized Direct Services side in 2022, about 75% of ILR's referrals were made to community housing organizations [863]. Many of those referrals were paired with hands-on peer support to meet independent living goals ranging from improving the housing search, to understanding the application and accommodation process, to preventing eviction. On the Systems Advocacy level, ILR advocated for and won seats on both the Metro Affordable Housing Bond Oversight and the Fair Housing Advocacy Committee, where as ILR's Housing Liaison I actively advocate for awareness of the unique needs of people with disabilities in community-based housing.

Oregon's seven Centers for Independent Living are offering essential peer-based support to find and sustain affordable and accessible housing across the State. Adding \$2.6 million for CIL Pay Equity is a good first step towards supporting our larger housing advocacy goals. Thank you!

# CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

WAYS & MEANS JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

**CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING**

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are non-residential community-based organizations that provide services and advocacy for individuals of all ages with all types of disabilities. There are nearly 450 CILs across the United States; Oregon has seven private nonprofit CILs, each with its own board of directors. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 mandates that at least 51% of the board and staff have disabilities.

Services provided by CILs include peer support, independent living skills training, information and referrals, and advocacy. CILs also help clients transition from nursing homes and other institutions to the community, provide assistance to those at risk of entering institutions, and help youth transition to postsecondary life. CILs support communities, helping them to become more accepting of and accessible by individuals with disabilities. The seven CILs in Oregon are located in Bend, Eugene, Grants Pass, Klamath Falls, Ontario, Portland, and Roseburg, CILs currently serve 22 counties across the state.

**CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING - SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2022**

Although CILs in Oregon are all private nonprofit organizations, Table 1 demonstrates that 88 percent of independent living funding in Oregon comes from state (40%), federal (47%), or local government (>1%). While 12 percent of CIL funding in Oregon comes from private sources.

<b>Oregon Centers for Independent Living</b>									
<b>Sources of Funding for Federal Fiscal Year 2022</b>									
Revenue Sources:	Independe nt Living Resources - ILR (Portland)	Lane Independe nt Living Alliance - LILA (Eugene)	Umpqua Valley disabilities Network - UVDN (Roseburg)	Handicap Awareness Support League - HASL (Grants Pass)	Abilitree (Bend)	Spokes Unlimited (Klamath Falls)	Eastern Oregon Center for Independe nt Living - EOCIL (Ontario)	State Independe nt Living Council - (Salem)	Total Oregon Independe nt Living System
State Funds Passed through	396,532	421,430	138,781	294,092	81,568	105,358	225,188	80,000	1,742,949
Local Government Funds	0	52,267	0	0	0	0	0	0	52,267
<b>Federal Funds:</b>									
Title VII, Chapter 1, Part B	42,340	42,340	42,340	42,340	42,340	42,340	42,340		296,379
Title VII, Chapter 1, Part C	405,600	0	109,075	146,209	142,658	160,327	0		963,869
Title VII, Chapter 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rehab Act, Section 110 (Innovation & Expansion)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	295,587	295,587
Other Federal Funds	72,830	16,466	164,622	196,492	69,263	3,167	0	1,800	524,639
<b>Total Federal Funds</b>	<b>520,770</b>	<b>58,805</b>	<b>316,037</b>	<b>385,041</b>	<b>254,260</b>	<b>205,834</b>	<b>42,340</b>	<b>297,387</b>	<b>2,080,474</b>
<b>Private Resources:</b>									
Foundations, Corporations or Trust Grants	34,409	188,557	7,888	0	0	15,982	0		246,836
Donations from individuals	2,545	14,302	1,874	9,528	8,614	184	0		37,047
Membership Fees	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Investment Income/Endowmen	-11,821	219	0	0	0	0	0	0	-11,602
Fees for Services (program income, etc.)	3,110	82,754	0	0	92,779	0	0		178,643
Other Resources	3,385	0	87,445	0	0	0	0		90,830
<b>Total Private Resources</b>	<b>31,628</b>	<b>285,831</b>	<b>97,207</b>	<b>9,528</b>	<b>101,393</b>	<b>16,166</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>541,753</b>
Pass through funds	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Resources</b>	<b>948,930</b>	<b>818,333</b>	<b>552,025</b>	<b>688,661</b>	<b>437,222</b>	<b>327,358</b>	<b>267,527</b>	<b>377,387</b>	<b>4,417,443</b>

*Figures provided by DHS - VR and taken from the FFY 2021 ACL PPR federal report*

**CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING**

CILs are mandated through the federal Rehabilitation Act, under the Administration for Community Living (ACL). Title VII, Chapter 1 of the Act states the purpose of the program is to “promote a philosophy of independent living including a philosophy of consumer control, peer support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and individual and system advocacy, in order to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence, and productivity of individuals with disabilities, and the integration and full inclusion of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of American society.”

**CONSUMERS SERVED IN FFY2022**

1,388 consumers were served by CILs across Oregon. 2022 continued to create challenges due to the COVID pandemic and continued restrictions statewide and saw a 3.5% decrease to the total number of consumers from the previous year. A total of 8,612 services were received, including 5,086 information and referral services. 3,526 Individual services were received in addition to information and referral.

**COUNTIES SERVED IN FFY2022**

Of the 1,388 consumers, services were provided in 30 of Oregon’s 36 counties. As outlined in the current SPIL, 14 counties are currently unserved, meaning the county does not fall within a CIL service area. However due to other contracts (ex. ADRC) services may be provided outside of a CIL service area. Of all the services provided 6.77% were provided in unserved counties in 2022.

**ADDITIONAL FUNDS REQUESTED – PAY EQUITY FOR CIL STAFF**

All workers deserve to earn a wage that meets their basic needs for housing, food, and family life. Oregon’s seven CILs have been unable to provide livable wages for its employees, many of whom have disabilities. As a result, turnover and vacancies are high, and CILs struggle to fulfill their federally mandated role in supporting Oregonians with disabilities. This policy package requests \$2,616,005 to allow all seven CILs across Oregon to adopt and implement salary and benefit standards that create pay equity for staff who play a vital role in their communities — helping Oregonians with disabilities to gain greater self-sufficiency and ability to participate in community life.

The requested funding would allow each CIL to implement the following pay standards to achieve pay equity across the state beginning in 2023:

- Independent Living Specialist (ILS) salary — increase wages to \$42,000–\$48,000 annually
- Mid-management salary — increase wages to \$58,500–\$67,500 annually
- Executive Director salary — \$90,000–\$112,500 annually
- Employer covers 8% of taxes on salary/wages
- Employer contributes 6% to retirement benefit
- Healthcare, dental and life insurances — \$10,000 per year per full-time employee (prorated as appropriate)

Based on each CIL’s current staffing levels, we are requesting \$2,616,005 per biennium. The funding will be distributed to the existing seven CILs based on their documented individual need (total staff multiplied by equitable pay and benefits) as shown in table 2 below.

	<b>Salary/wages</b>	<b>Taxes</b>	<b>Retirement</b>	<b>Healthcare</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Abilitree</b>	\$101,000.00	\$8,080.00	\$13,680.00	\$25,800.00	\$148,560.00
<b>EOCIL</b>	\$131,940.00	\$10,555.00	\$9,947.00	\$1,500.00	\$153,942.00
<b>HASL</b>	\$73,315.00	\$5,865.00	\$17,772.00	\$65,000.00	\$161,952.00
<b>ILR</b>	\$215,000.00	\$17,200.00	\$44,000.00	\$30,800.00	\$307,000.00
<b>LILA</b>	\$165,304.00	\$13,224.00	\$22,260.00	\$50,653.00	\$251,441.00
<b>Spokes</b>	\$115,659.50	\$6,553.00	\$8,213.00	\$11,200.00	\$141,625.50
<b>UVDN</b>	\$93,250.00	\$7,460.00	\$12,172.00	\$30,600.00	\$143,482.00
				<b>Total request</b>	<b>\$1,308,002.50</b>
					<b>\$2,616,005.00</b>

Annual  
Biennium

This funding is needed so Oregon’s CILs can fulfill this purpose, and moreover, can support Oregonians with disabilities who are both employed by this program and recipients of the services CILs provide.