



Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council

207 House Avenue • Suite 107 • Room 14 • Camp Hill, PA 17011

PA SILC and CIL Testimony for Thursday April 16, 2015 (10AM-12PM)

PA House Human Services CMTE-Adult Services (DHS OLTL focus)

Good morning. My name is Jeff Iseman. I am the Program Analyst for the Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council (PA SILC). Our mission is to use our collective power and legal mandate to develop and secure public policies that ensure civil rights and expand options for all people with disabilities in all aspects of life.

SILCs and Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are authorized for 50 states and 6 US Territories under the Federal Rehabilitation Act. Both PA SILC and CILs are noted in Pennsylvania's Act 139 of 1994. PA SILC is primarily funded through the Federal Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration (soon to be Health & Human Services-HHS) and PA Labor & Industry's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). PA SILC works with the 18 CILs in PA and other disability organizations across the commonwealth to promote Independent Living (IL) for people with disabilities and seniors. We also collaborate on a national level with National Council on Independent Living (NCIL). Every three years, we do a State Plan for Independent Living or SPIL involving the disability community and relate community partners. Areas of focus in the SPIL have included long term care, healthcare, housing, employment, transportation, education, employment and emergency preparedness.

Pennsylvania's 18 CILs have **4 core services** that every CIL does: 1) **Information & Referral (I&R)**-individuals contact CILs and get information and referrals for disability programs; 2) **Advocacy**-this include issues for both individual and systemic issues. An example of an individual may be working with a landlord to rent to a tenant with disability- getting a removable ramp or addressing some biases on renting to tenants with disabilities. A system issue may be polling place accessibility, making sure that all polling places in a particularly county are accessible to individuals with mobility and sensory issues; 3) **Peer Support**- this is matching someone with the same or similar disability to support you. Example: An individual is matched up with someone who previously lived in a nursing home and had successfully transitioned out; 4) **Independent Living (IL) Skills**- people who acquire a disability often need to relearn basic life skills taken for granted. Examples include walking, maneuvering in their living space, using transportation. In the near future, CILs will be required to do an additional **5th core service** with 3 components: 1) **Nursing Home and other Institutional Transition**; 2) **Diversion from Nursing Home and other Institutional Care**; 3) **Transition to adult life for students with disabilities** (age 18 or post high school)-move toward obtaining competitive employment or further education. The recently added 5th core service is under the Federal Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) signed in July 2014 (regulations to be finished later this year).

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Good morning. My name is Matthew Seeley (board member). I am a current board member and former staff for PA SILC. I acquired my disability in 1996 through a car accident and wound up in a nursing home in the Lehigh Valley area. I received Office of Long Term Living (OLTL) services through United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Central PA and went through Nursing Home Transition (NHT) with the help of Liberty Resources, a CIL. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) was vital to me in obtaining support for advancing my education and employment. With this assistance, I eventually got my college degree and left the nursing home to live independently on my own.

In 2003-2007, I went to work full time as the Public Policy Analyst for PA SILC. From 2007-2011, I pursued and obtained my law degree at Widener University in the Harrisburg area. I passed the bar on my first attempts and am licensed to practice law in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey. I have worked as an Assistant District Attorney in Franklin County's court system and for various attorneys in Central PA. In addition to being on the PA SILC board, I serve on the board of the PA Rehabilitation Council, a non-profit board that informs and advises the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Governor on the diverse issues affecting vocational rehabilitation as well as Blue Mountain Community Services Inc., a non-profit providing Service Coordination and other supports for individuals with disabilities in the Harrisburg area.

Our hope is that the members of this committee and others reading our comments will take a closer look at Independent Living (IL) for people with disabilities and seniors. It's about providing us with choices to make our everyday lives better. Empowering us to help us help ourselves in the way we choose-in every area of life to the greatest degree possible.

Final points: Half of our CILs receive state funding through the PA Labor & Industry Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. Most Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) for individuals with physical disabilities are funded through the PA Department of Human Services Office of Long Term Living (DHS OLTL) and the Department of Aging programs for seniors to remain in the community. There are other important state funded programs that your efforts support in promoting for independence for people with disabilities and seniors.

PA SILC thanks the members of this committee for inviting us and listening to our testimony. We will be around to answer questions.

For further information:

- Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council (PA SILC) www.pasilc.org
- Pennsylvania Council on Independent Living, (PCIL, Trade Association for CILs) www.pcil.net
- Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Office of Long Term Living (DHS OLTL) – physical disabilities
<http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/dhsorganization/officeoflongtermliving/index.htm>
- National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) www.ncil.org