

**Written Testimony
of
Jim McConnell
to**

Ways and Means Joint Sub-Committee on Human Services Hearing on March 2nd, 2023

Re: HB 5026 ODHS Budget – request for \$2.6 million additional funding for Independent Living centers

My name is Jim McConnell. I live in Portland. I am a (volunteer) Board member of Independent Living Resources (ILR), a non-profit serving persons with disabilities in the greater Portland area.

I am testifying today in support of a Policy Option Package (POP) to increase state funding of \$2.6 million for a **Pay Equity Initiative** for the 7 Non-profit Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in Oregon. The Pay Equity POP was included in the DHS and Voc. Rehab. Budgets but did not make it into the new Governor's Proposed Budget.

The CILs in Oregon are part of a national network of over 500 agencies authorized and funded by the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (The Act). The purpose of the program is to promote independent living for persons with disabilities, "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."

The Act requires that participating states have a Designated State Entity (Voc. Rehab. In Oregon) that:

- develops, jointly with local agencies, a **3-year State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL)**
- approves the CILs in the state
- approves the independent living services to be provided, and
- receives, accounts for and disburses funds. Voc.Rehab. passes both Federal and State funds to the local CILS.

In effect, the SPIL with its participating non-profit agencies, is a state-sponsored program. Yet the staff of the 7 local agencies do not get funding for any of the regular increases in wages and benefits that would accrue to state employees. **Wages and benefits of the CILS are not competitive with those of similar employers in their areas.** The requested funding would enable the CILs to provide for living wages and benefits for the employees of CILs, many of whom have disabilities.

ODHS and Voc. Rehab. recognized this deficiency when they submitted the Pay Equity POP request for approval. The requested funding would remedy the problem.

I strongly urge your support for the \$2.6 million request for the CILs Pay Equity.

