

Good Morning Co-chairs Campos & Valderrama and members of the committee.

My Name is Curtis Raines. I am from Klamath Falls, Oregon and the Director of SPOKES Unlimited a Center for Independent Living. I have submitted my full testimony on OLIS.

I am here to ask this committee to increase funds by \$2.6 million in your budget process for Oregon’s seven Centers for Independent Living (CILs). CILs are funded under HB 5026.

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. I myself have a disability.

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 people with disabilities within their communities, increasing accessibility and awareness. 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.

Although CILs in Oregon are all private nonprofit organizations, their funding comes from state, federal, local and private sources. For more information refer to Table 1 in my written testimony.

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.”

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 their 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.

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.

SUCCESS STORIES FROM SPOKES UNLIMITED CONSUMERS – (PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION INCLUDING NAMES HAVE BEEN REMOVED)

Maintaining Independence - Nursing home diversion

DP is a 74-year-old man who is legally blind and has multiple physical disabilities including COPD, diabetes, and obesity. He has been a consumer of SPOKES for multiple years. He lives independently in his own apartment with visits from home care workers twice a week. He uses accessible public transportation to get around town, shop, medical appointments, and visits to SPOKES. He has had serious health problems and was in the hospital several months ago due to cardiac and respiratory distress. During his hospital stay, he expressed fear that he would not be able to go back home and would have to go into Plum Ridge nursing home. Through peer counseling, he decided to make changes to improve his health. In past attempts, he had not been able to stick to diets and always went back to unhealthy habits. The peer support provided through regular check-in appointments with SPOKES staff are helping him stay on track, especially at times when he feels discouraged. Learning Independent Living skills, including incremental changes and healthier options has helped him maintain his health and remain in his own apartment.

CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

WAYS & MEANS JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

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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.

Oregon Centers for Independent Living									
Sources of Funding for Federal Fiscal Year 2022									
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
Federal Funds:									
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
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
Total Federal Funds	520,770	58,805	316,037	385,041	254,260	205,834	42,340	297,387	2,080,474
Private Resources:									
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
Investment Income/Endowmen	-11,821	219	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
Total Private Resources	31,628	285,831	97,207	9,528	101,393	16,166	0	0	541,753
Pass through funds	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Total Resources	948,930	818,333	552,025	688,661	437,222	327,358	267,527	377,387	4,417,443

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

CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

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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.

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

Annual
\$2,616,005.00 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.

JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES – 3/2/2023

Maintaining Independence - Nursing home diversion

DP is a 74-year-old man who is legally blind and has multiple physical disabilities including COPD, diabetes, and obesity. He has been a consumer of SPOKES for multiple years. He lives independently in his own apartment with visits from home care workers twice a week. He uses accessible public transportation to get around town, shop, medical appointments, and visits to SPOKES. He has had serious health problems and was in the hospital several months ago due to cardiac and respiratory distress. During his hospital stay, he expressed fear that he would not be able to go back home and would have to go into Plum Ridge nursing home. Through peer counseling, he decided to make changes to improve his health. In past attempts, he had not been able to stick to diets and always went back to unhealthy habits. The peer support provided through regular check-in appointments with SPOKES staff are helping him stay on track, especially at times when he feels discouraged. Learning Independent Living skills, including incremental changes and healthier options has helped him maintain his health and remain in his own apartment.

Independent Living Skills Training

JJ is a woman in her sixties that has mental health and developmental disabilities. JJ has been in and out of prison and struggled with addiction throughout her life. When JJ came to SPOKES, she was reading and writing on a first-grade level and she wanted to learn to read and write at a level that she felt comfortable with. We set a goal to increase her reading and writing IL skills, although when we started, we did not know what level we would end at. JJ came to SPOKES twice a week for appointments, to work on the IL skills. Each week we would spend one appointment reading, learning to sound out words and the meanings of words. During the other appointment JJ would practice writing words and using them in a sentence. JJ achieved her goal reaching a fifth-grade level in both reading and writing. JJ is now more independent; she no longer must ask someone to read her things, she is able to read independently and understand what she reads.

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Peer Counseling

AG is a woman in her fifties; she has chronic pain, anxiety, PTSD and Auditory processing disorder. When AG came to SPOKES, she met with a peer counselor. She expressed sadness and frustration, as she was no longer able to do things she used to and hoped to learn how to do some of them again. The peer support offered through meeting with a SPOKES staff member who also has disabilities, allowed both staff and AG to discuss experiences, ways of doing things, acceptance of accommodations and creating joy and happiness, just in a different way. Peer support is having someone share their struggles, around disabilities and making joy out of it. It helped AG accept her disability and she now lives life to the fullest.

Self-Advocacy & Information and referral

MM is 51-year-old women with Developmental Disabilities, who had been abused, taken advantage of, told what to do, and controlled for most of her life. MM wanted to work but was scared she would lose her benefits. SPOKES referred her to the Work Incentives Network (WIN), to explore her options of working and maintaining benefits. She was able to gain information so she could work without fear of losing her benefits, allowing her informed choice. MM has also learned self-advocacy skills through services received from SPOKES, including advocating for what she wants and what she needs.

MM also receives services from her Developmental Disabilities provider, they further helped her gain a job along with a job coach. However, when MM started her new job, she was not happy with the way her job coach treated her. She used her advocacy skills with her service provider, job coach and the company that employed the job coach. Using self-advocacy skills, she was able to get a new job coach with a new company. After three weeks of job coaching, she is now working independently. The services provided by SPOKES and WIN program, have led to greater independence for MM. She now advocates for herself, feels like she is a member of her community and has greater self-confidence and self-worth.

JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES – 3/2/2023

Youth Transition

AD is a 17-year-old young woman (soon to be 18) with multiple disabilities including FAS, PTSD, Epilepsy, Speech impairment and learning disabilities. She attends the local community college and has a goal of living independently. AD and her sister spent much of her childhood with her grandfather while their parents were not able to care for them. She is currently living with her father with support and guidance from her retired grandfather she transitions to adulthood and gains independence.

Her grandfather encouraged AD to apply for SSI and encouraged her to start the process on her own. On the day before she was to have a phone interview with SSI, her grandfather contacted SPOKES. Initially he vented frustration about "the broken system" and how hard it was for them to get any help. A SPOKES Independent Living Specialist (ILS) went over the process with him and advised that AD should not be expected to go through the interview and application process on her own. The ILS invited them to come into SPOKES for the interview and offered to attend the SSI phone interview with them, which AD accepted. During the interview the SS rep suggested they get started with several forms with assistance from SPOKES. The ILS printed the suggested forms and went over with them, insuring they understood the process and what to do. With guidance from SPOKES ILS, they were able to expedite her application so she will receive benefits as soon as she is 18. She is excited about living on her own and realizing her goal of independence.

Assistive technology

DC is a 77-year-old man who is blind with other physical disabilities, who sometimes uses a wheelchair. He lives alone and has occasional help with household chores, shopping and visits from Home Health. He is a Veteran and a few years ago spent several weeks at American Lake Blind Rehabilitation Center in Tacoma where he learned cane travel, assistive technology and activities of daily living. The VA has supplied him with assistive technology including a computer with needed accessibility features. He also receives services occasionally from Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB), through the Medford office. He came to SPOKES, when the OCB staff was not available to provide the training, he needed to use his newest iPhone. SPOKES scheduled regular appointments with him to

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provide one on one training. By the second appointment, he had learned some basic skills and shortcuts and was feeling confident enough to explore features on his own. At one appointment, he said, "I've had four iPhones and all this other help, but I've learned more coming here than I have in all those years".