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Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Human Services Testimony

March 2nd , 2023

Good Morning Co-Chairs Campos and Valderrama, as well as other committee members,

My name is Dr. Ryan Skelton, Psy.D. I am from Gresham, Oregon. I live with cerebral palsy. I also identify as a traumatic brain injury survivor, because I lost oxygen to a part of my brain when I was young which controls muscle coordination and movement. I work at Independent Living Resources in Portland as a psychologist. I also facilitate ILR's 20 year old Traumatic brain Injury Support Group, and serve as Transportation Advocacy Liaison for 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 funded under HB 5026.

I am requesting these funds to implement Pay Equity for people with disabilities working at CILs across Oregon. There has not been a meaningful increase in CIL SG Funding for 10 years!

I'm asking 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.

I am also here to share with you the importance of funding extraordinary peer-based traumatic brain injury and transportation services that are provided by independent living specialists like me at CILs across Oregon.

CILs Offer Important TBI Support Service and Transportation Advocacy

TBI consumers have profound and unique support needs to live independently in the community

For example, many individuals with TBI require assistance communicating with their doctor's office about the challenges they face on a daily basis. They may also require assistance communicating with their cell phone provider to restore critical cell phone service, or come up with a payment plan, or install a new SIM card. They may also wish to change their medical insurance but not know whom to speak to in order to initiate the process. Each of these conversations is challenging for all of us, but even more so for those with disabilities that affect their ability to process the world and communicate with others..

Regarding my transportation work, in addition to advising on policy matters related to the ADA through Tri-Met's Committee on Accessible Transportation, I might provide guidance to individuals on how to fill out the form to apply for door-to-door transportation services, or we might discuss where to find mobility training, if they are struggling with fixed route buses and do not know which bus to take.

Again, services are provided with a focus on the individual and their specific disability. Without peer-based service delivery, it becomes much more difficult to understand someone's direct experience when they attempt to utilize or request a service. I am pleased to be able to provide these supports both as a peer and as a psychologist, a role model for what people with disabilities can aspire to in their lives.

Accessing affordable transportation is essential for people with disabilities, especially those like me who experience mobility challenges. I use The Max Train and fixed route buses to commute from Gresham into Portland for my job at ILR. I thus bring a unique perspective to serving as ILR's Transportation Advocacy Liaison to Tri-Met's Committee on Accessible Transportation.

Serving on the CAT over the years allowed me and ILR to ensure safe door to door lift buses. During significant called and he related weather emergencies, our agency was even able to be a part of keeping the disabled community safe when the old fleet was failing and experiencing spontaneous engine fires. I've also effected policy and the development of the SE Division Street accessible new express transportation route in the region.

I came to ILR 10 years ago as a consumer in need of peer supports to establish myself as a newly graduated psychologist. I became an ILR staff member and have grown into a seasoned professional.

Funding the CIL Pay Equity request before you today for \$2.6 million will help to ensure that people with disabilities like me served by Oregon's CILs will be able to continue to receive vital peer based services. Please join me and my colleagues today and add these \$2.6 million in funds to the DHS budget.