

Thank you, Co-Chairs Campos, and Valderama and Committee Members,

I would like to take this time to tell you about my experience of engaging with my local Center for Independent Living – Lane Independent Living Alliance (also known as LILA). I was diagnosed with a mental health disability in my early adulthood. This diagnosis devastated me – and really dashed my lofty dreams of having a fulfilling career. At the time I thought that this was not a disability that I would ever be able to become independent with, let alone have a meaningful career.

I received amazing service at LILA only a few years ago. Between the 1-on-1 peer delivered mental health support from an employee that has lived experience and engaging with several programs that they offered (including job readiness skills, eliminating self-defeating behaviors, and education about my rights in the workplace as a disabled individual), I was finally able to see a road to becoming self-sufficient. I quickly started to re-evaluate any assumptions about my disability preventing me from doing meaningful and purposeful work.

Within 9 months of starting services with LILA, I became gainfully employed within LILA. 2.5 years later I am managing a mental health drop-in center in downtown Eugene, I have the privilege of representing people with disabilities on community advisory boards, and really feel that I am making a difference for my community. I also utilized the Work Incentive Network services offered through LILA to navigate the very convoluted process of getting off public assistance. As of almost 2 years ago, I am no longer receiving any financial assistance from our State's social safety net programs. I can also say that I am now a proud homeowner, fully independent, and loving my career. I have never felt as fulfilled as I do now – and this is in large part due to the support I received from LILA.

Ways and Means Committee, I ask that you except my testimony as evidence that CIL Services genuinely make a difference to so many in the disabled community. I consider myself as a great (and not unique) example that CIL services are essential and make a difference.

I urge the committee to fund the 2.6-million-dollar request for CIL Pay Equity. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Truthfully and Respectively Submitted.

Scott Lemons

Manager, Lane Independent Living Alliance