

January 5, 2022 Budget Hearing

Greetings and Thank you for the opportunity to speak today at the Virginia Budget Hearing I am Gayl Brunk and I am the Executive Director of Valley Associates for Independent Living-most know me as Gayl with VAIL-and I currently have the privilege of serving as the President of the Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living-comprised of the 17 Centers for Independent Living in Virginia. My goal today is to share with you the need for funding for services for individuals with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth. Centers for Independent Living are and have been a critical and vital component of service delivery for people with disabilities through direct service as well as advocacy efforts and technical assistance. CIL's assist individuals with securing in-home services to remain independent in their communities, CIL's connect individuals to home modification programs and assist individuals with finding funding for modifications, CIL's provide information and support to assist individuals in accessing personal care attendant services, teaching independent living skills, transition services to youth, and assisting businesses as well as local government in understanding their obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Locally here, VAIL serves the counties and cities of Harrisonburg, Rockingham, Staunton, Waynesboro, Augusta, Bath, Highland, Rockbridge, Lexington, and Buena Vista. We have provided direct service to 491 unique individuals last fiscal year. VAIL provided approximately 700 hours of community education and 388 individuals received services that prevented them from entering institutions. VAIL completed all this with 12 full time equivalent hard and dedicated staff. VAIL never stopped providing service throughout the COVID 19 pandemic. We built ramps to ensure individuals could remain or return to their homes, we provided PPE to keep caregivers and the individuals safe, we conducted home visits utilizing appropriate distance and PPE to continue to keep individuals with disabilities engaged in their community. Currently VAIL has created a few waiting lists for services that we provide due to the demand for our services while we continue to work with rising costs of providing

services. It is also a fact that there are several areas in the state that do not have access to a Center for Independent Living and a Center for Independent Living is needed in every Planning District to ensure individuals with disabilities have access to information and services to ensure independence in their communities. CILs throughout the Commonwealth have provided critical services to more than 9000 individuals with significant disabilities empowering them to remain in their community and fulfilled more than 33,000 requests for services. CILs assist in securing housing, accommodations and modifications, identify support services, transition services, and provide critical information and referral to ensure individuals with significant disabilities have access to their community and live a fulfilling and engaged life. I urge you to include funding for Centers for Independent Living in this years budget cycle. The request that CILs ask you to consider is for 1.6 Million that will provide statewide coverage, provide for current CILs to meet the growing need to provide critical services to individuals with disabilities to ensure independence in the community. I thank you for the support over the years and as we look to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities I thank you for your commitment to community life and ask for your support.