

Center for Disability Rights, Inc.

November 17, 2007
Rochester, New York

Attention: Division of the Budget – Governor Eliot Spitzer

**RE: Establishing Independent Living Center Services
To Cover Ontario, Yates, and Wayne County.**

I live in Wayne County and currently work out of CDR's Monroe County office to provide services to individuals with disabilities and their families in Ontario, Wayne and Yates Counties. Unfortunately without state funding many needs are going unmet. We need to change that, and we need the Governor's help.

I am personally aware of the ongoing need of individuals with disabilities for housing, employment, health care services, finance and benefits management, transportation, and community based services. Education on resources and the needed supports to access them are often envisioned as not available to them. This is often a population of meager means, fixed income and resources and they are forced into uncomfortable and worrisome situations – do we eat, pay our bills, how will we ever be able to meet our specific needs related to our disabilities. They feel estranged from their very own communities; and services that are there to serve them just seem to be out of their reach. (Out of their reach mentally, physically and financially.)

An Independent Living Center that is community based and staffed by PEERS, people to work with you; who have been there and done that is just what they need.

I know the frustration of being an individual with a disability; as well as a parent of a child with a disability and being at wits end- not knowing who to contact or how to get them to respond to me. I as well as many others needed to have a local community based agency to provide support and access to what is available for me.

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Geneva Office 1 Franklin Square Geneva, New York 14456 (315) 789-1800 V/TTY (315) 789-2100 FAX

I am asking on their behalf for the Governor's budget to support the recommendation by the Board of Regents to fund CDR to provide IL services through an Independent Living Center to cover Ontario, Wayne and Yates counties.

This would make available to the individuals in need; services that would enable them to be independent in their lives, to go to school, work, be financially stable, have their health needs met, and ultimately be able to give back to the community. CDR as a state funded ILC would provide core services of: Information and referral, Independent Living skills, Peer support services, Individuals and systems advocacy as well as many other programs and services.

Independent Living Centers are one of the few agencies that can assist persons whose lives have been influenced by a disability; through every step of their life from birth to death. An Independent Living Center would be there to provide support and services to returning veterans, children with disabilities and their families, schools, the ageing population, newly disabled and most importantly the many individuals who unfortunately fall through the cracks.

According to the 2000 census report:

Ontario county has a total population of 101,340 of which 14% 14, 532 have reported having a disability and 13, 813 were over the age of 65

Wayne County has a population of 91,951 of which 15 % 12, 474 reported having a disability and 11,010 were over age 65

Yates County has a population of 24,621 with 20 % 4,406 reported having a disability and 3,817 were over the age of 65.

Total 3 county populations of 217,912 with 56,092 either reporting having a disability or over age 65.

This is a fact of life that disabilities and aging touches every one of us; personally, our families and most certainly in our communities. So everyone would have the need for an Independent Living Center to be based in their community accessible and ready to provide serves to them.

Independent Living Centers have been providing services to individuals with disabilities in their own communities since the 60's. The results have been nothing but positive sometimes miraculous, for all involved.

It is more than time for Ontario, Wayne, and Yates County to have the same opportunity.

We are asking Governor Spitzer to include funding in his State budget to support the Board of Regents recommendation to fund CDR to provide an Independent Living Center for this region.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

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