



CT State Independent Living Council (CT SILC) Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

3:00 PM

Board Members Present: Gretchen Knauff, Chris Blake, Carmen Correa-Rios, Melissa Cullen-Carter, Farrah Garland, Michelle Johnson, Corey Lee, Rich Luby, Jaclyn Pinney, Kim Smith, Melissa Thompson, Emily Zambrello

Board Members Absent: George Michna*, Mark Linabury, Ron Sparks, Darrell Ruopp

***Denotes non-voting member.**

Staff: Molly Cole, SILC Executive Director; Michele DuBois, Data Coordinator/Office Administrator

Guests: Charlie Conway, Executive Director - Access Independence (AI); Eileen Healy, Executive Director - Independence Northwest (IN); Sharon Heddle, Executive Director - Disabilities Network of Eastern Connecticut (DNEC); Michael Solakian, Solakian and Company CPA

ACTION	AGENDA ITEM
Call to Order	The meeting was called to Order at 3:02 pm - Quorum established.
President’s Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gretchen Knauff welcomed everyone, opened the meeting, acknowledged the full agenda, and welcomed the new CT SILC board member Melissa Cullen-Carter. She emphasized the importance of staying informed and active regarding proposed Medicaid cuts, urging members to educate others and advocate.
Good News	<p>Chris Blake, Farrah Garland, Corey Lee, and Melissa Thompson shared positive news with the rest of the board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chris Blake shared his experience attending a program in New Haven and engaging with local services. • Farrah Garland was appointed as a Justice of the Peace. • Corey Lee was featured in Mental Health Connecticut’s “Let’s Face It” campaign and featured on various news stations and NPR, where three of his songs were played. • Melissa Thompson shared her first experience at fishing and highlighted the use of the GoodMaps indoor navigation App at Bradley International Airport, which supports accessibility for people with disabilities.
Public Comment	There was no public comment.
Minutes from March 19, 2025	<p>Motion to accept the minutes by Carmen Correa-Rios. Kim Smith seconded.</p> <p>ACTION: The minutes were approved. Melissa Cullen-Carter abstained.</p>
Audit Report	<p>Michael Solakian of Solakian & Company presented the audit for FY 2024 (October 1, 2023, to September 30, 2024). The audit received a clean opinion with no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses. Key points included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial statements required no adjustments; QuickBooks records were accurate. • Liquidity remains strong with over one year’s worth of operating expenses in reserve.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional state revenue was offset by increased center payments and new staff. • Discussion on compensated absences: Audit will be amended to reflect up to 5 days of PTO payout upon employee departure. • The Board discussed FDIC insurance limits and plans to split funds across accounts. • Mike explained the new Connecticut audit thresholds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Charitable audit threshold rose from \$500K to \$1M. ○ The state single audit threshold rose from \$300K to \$500K. • CT SILC is under both thresholds and may consider switching from a full audit to a review or compilation in the future. <p>ACTION: A Motion to accept the audit with the amendment regarding compensated absences was made by Melissa Thompson, seconded by Emily Zambrello. Melissa Cullen-Carter abstained. The audit was accepted.</p>
<p>Treasurer’s Report</p>	<p>Gretchen Knauff reviewed the Financial Report Summary for the period ending April 30, 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financials reflect a late start to SPIL activities due to contract delays. • CT SILC's financial position at the end of April 2025 remains very good. • Next quarter funding through June 30, 2025, was submitted to the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) and the CT SILC is awaiting payment. • Late start on SPIL goals contributed to underspending. • Interpreter expenses are nearing budget limits; travel expenses remain low. • The bank account has been reconciled through April 30, 2025, without any issues. <p>No formal vote required for the Treasurer’s Report.</p>
<p>Executive Director’s Report</p>	<p>Molly Cole gave the Executive Director’s report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract and Reports: The third-quarter payment invoice was submitted on April 7, 2025, to ADS. While the federal government confirmed the funds are available, the payment has not yet been received. Once the audit is finalized, the audit and Form 990 will be sent to the designated state agency (ADS). A technical amendment was made to the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) correcting county service areas for Independence Northwest. • Projects: The CT Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance (CCDLA) meetings will reduce in frequency post-legislative session to save costs. CT SILC outreach materials were purchased in bulk to ensure supply and reduce expenses. • Supported Decision Making (SDM): A webinar titled "Supported Decision Making: From Theory to Practice" is scheduled, focusing on how to write supported decision-making agreements. Presenters include Stephen Byers from Disability Rights Connecticut (DRCT) and Jonathan Martinez. Supported Decision Making will be the keynote topic at the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) conference in June, with CT SILC listed as a co-sponsor. • Aging and Disability: AgeWell Collaborative acknowledges the differences between aging and disability and is adjusting its approach. Accessibility improvements are being implemented for the Aging CT Summit. Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) directors will meet to



	<p>discuss collaboration on May 27, 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katie Beckett Waiver Work Group: Katie Beckett bill passed but does not eliminate the waiting list as claimed. The cutoff age for the waiver remains at 18, after which individuals can apply for Medicaid independently. • Webinars and Training: A two-part webinar on human trafficking has been completed. While suggestions for new topics or speakers are welcome, future webinars will be reduced to manage costs, particularly for sign language interpreters. • Strategic Plan: Strategic planning is on hold due to federal funding uncertainties.
<p>Status of Federal Government and CT SILC Contingency Budgeting/SPIL</p>	<p>Molly Cole reported on the leaked federal budget proposal, which includes significant restructuring of funding for Independent Living programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the proposed changes, funding would be distributed to states as block grants, eliminating direct federal support for SILCs, Protection & Advocacy (P&A) systems, and Developmental Disabilities Councils (DD Councils). • There is uncertainty about how Connecticut’s designated state entity (ADS) will allocate these funds. The CT SILC may not receive direct funding and could face competition from other state programs. • Emphasized the urgency of engaging with ADS to advocate for disability community priorities before decisions are finalized. • A contingency plan is being developed to manage potential funding cuts. Measures under consideration include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Closing the physical office and moving materials to a storage unit. ○ Reducing the number of webinars and use of sign language interpreters. ○ Switching from a full audit to a financial review to reduce costs. ○ Halting strategic planning. ○ Canceling the Candidates Forum due to lack of funding from defunded partner agencies. • Board members discussed the need for a unified plan to avoid fragmented advocacy and ensure equitable distribution of any remaining funds. • Molly noted that while CT SILC has a healthy reserve, careful management will be essential in the coming year.
<p>CT SILC Tagline (Not S, M, L, XL)</p>	<p>The purpose of the discussion was to select a new tagline for CT SILC that reflects its mission and identity. Members reviewed and voted on potential taglines. Finalists narrowed to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Independence for People with Disabilities Through Advocacy, Access, and Action. 2. Turning Disability into Possibility. <p>ACTION: Final vote to be conducted via email.</p>
<p>Committee Reports</p>	<p>Committee reports were postponed until the next Board meeting.</p>
<p>Adjourn</p>	<p>Melissa Thompson made a motion to adjourn. Michelle Johnson seconded. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 4:58 PM.</p>