



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

**Wednesday, July 16, 2025
3:00 PM**

Board Members Present: Gretchen Knauff, Chris Blake, Melissa Cullen-Carter, Corey Lee, Mark Linabury, Rich Luby, Jaclyn Pinney, Darrell Ruopp, Kim Smith, Melissa Thompson, Emily Zambrello

Board Members Absent: George Michna*, Carmen Correa-Rios, Farrah Garland, Michelle Johnson, Ron Sparks

***Denotes non-voting member.**

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

Guests: Eileen Healy, Executive Director - Independence Northwest (IN); Sharon Heddle, Executive Director - Disabilities Network of Eastern Connecticut (DNEC)

ACTION	AGENDA ITEM
Call to Order	The meeting was called to Order at 3:04 pm - Quorum established.
President's Remarks	Gretchen Knauff welcomed everyone, opened the meeting, and congratulated Melissa Cullen-Carter on becoming the new Executive Director of Access Independence.
Good News	<p>Melissa Cullen-Carter, Melissa Thompson, Emily Zambrello, Corey Lee, and Gretchen Knauff shared good news with the rest of the board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melissa Cullen-Carter announced that she has been appointed Executive Director of Access Independence (AI). She expressed gratitude for the board's support, excitement for the new role, and willingness to collaborate closely with CT SILC. • Melissa Thompson shared that she will be celebrating her 50th birthday in Jamaica on August 20, 2025. • Emily Zambrello reported her participation as a background actor in the television series Dexter: Resurrection, appearing in a scene filmed in New York that featured actors with physical disabilities. • Corey Lee announced he will be attending the Wu-Tang Clan's final tour concert at Madison Square Garden. • Gretchen Knauff shared her recent experience providing ADA training to police recruits, noting the generational differences in cultural references used during the session.
Public Comment	There was no public comment.
Minutes from May 21, 2025	<p>Motion to accept the minutes by Melissa Thompson. Corey Lee seconded.</p> <p>ACTION: The minutes were approved. Darrell Ruopp, Rich Luby, and Mark Linabury abstained.</p>



<p>Treasurer’s Report</p>	<p>Mark Linabury presented the Financial Report Summary for the period ending June 30, 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total income increased by approximately \$10,000, primarily due to the Candidates’ Forum, reflected under “Other Income.” • CT SILC's financial position at the end of June 2025 remains strong. • Payments from the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) are now current, with the third-quarter payment received on June 19, 2025. • Activity for SPIL Goals 1 and 2 totaled approximately \$26,000 this fiscal year to date. • The bank account has been reconciled through June 30, 2025, without any issues. • Given current uncertainties in federal funding, the Board and staff remain cautious in spending. <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: Third-quarter payment from the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) was received on June 19, 2025; final-quarter invoice has been submitted. An amended Program Performance Report (PPR) was submitted on July 7, 2025, but certain ADS sections were rejected by Administration for Community Living (ACL) and must be corrected before resubmission. • Projects: The CT Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance (CCDLA) meetings are only meeting monthly for July and August. The meetings are projected to start twice a month in September in preparation for the legislative session and then go back to weekly sessions. CT SILC/CCDLA are sponsoring the 35th Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Commemoration on July 30, 2025, at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. Molly encouraged everyone to attend. Molly Cole is attending the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Conference in Washington, DC. She is also working with other SILC Directors across the country to update the language for SILCs in the proposed reauthorization of the Rehab Act. • Supported Decision Making (SDM): A webinar titled "Supported Decision Making: From Theory to Practice" focusing on how to write supported decision-making agreements was held on May 22, 2025. The SDM Policy Group is meeting weekly to plan for the next legislative session. They are also continuing work on the SDM toolkit and website. • Aging and Disability: Continuing work on Aging and Disability initiatives along with being part of the planning committee for the Aging CT Summit. Accessibility improvements have been part of the planning. The Aging CT Summit will take place on October 6, 2025, at the Aqua Turf. Alison Barkoff will be the keynote speaker.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webinars and Training: Webinars were scaled back for the summer due to cost and timing. Planning for fall when circumstances become a little clearer. • Outreach: The CT SILC attended the following events and disseminated information on CT SILC, Centers for Independent Living (CILs), CCDLA, and SDM. Events pick up in October and we are looking for suggestions on other outreach opportunities (preferably free or low cost). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ June 6: CT SILC attended the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) conference on June 6. There were about 350 attendees. The CT SILC sponsored Jonathan Martinez as the keynote speaker and who also ran a two-hour workshop on SDM. ○ June 7: CT SILC attended the Stonington Westerly Pride event. ○ June 9-10: CT SILC attended the two-day ATECH conference.
<p>Status of Federal Government and CT SILC Contingency Budgeting/SPIL</p>	<p>Molly provided a federal funding update, explaining that the President’s budget includes IL funds for SILCs, as well as covering other disability programs that may be cut. If awarded, Connecticut’s SPIL would require rewriting the SPIL to allocate funds to those other defunded programs and ongoing monitoring by the Executive Director. The budget timeline remains uncertain, with a possible government shutdown after October 1. ADS has agreed to issue contracts using last year’s language so operations can continue, though funding levels are unknown. Molly emphasized cautious commitments while staying focused on the CT SILC mission and remaining adaptable to changing circumstances. She noted from her national SILC calls that there is continued discussion on SPIL modifications and concerns from some SILCs being approached for funding they do not have.</p> <p>Board members discussed the potential rollback of federal DEI requirements, noting the value of continuing inclusive hiring practices. Other topics included school funding lawsuits, potential cuts to veteran services, housing programs, SNAP, and Medicaid, and concerns over DSS’s capacity to handle increased demand.</p> <p>Molly is exploring additional grant opportunities for early spring. Board members stressed the importance of advocacy, public education, legislative engagement, and monitoring use of the state’s budget surplus. The group agreed to share information, monitor upcoming hearings, and consider fundraising to address critical needs.</p>
<p>Recommendations from Executive Committee/Discussion/Vote</p>	<p>Three Topics were discussed and voted on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheelchair Repair Committee: The Executive Committee recommended transitioning the Wheelchair Repair Committee out of CT SILC to operate independently, citing divisiveness and operational challenges. Corey Lee asked to delay the vote until after the coalition meets on August 6, 2025, to gather feedback and provide context to members. <p>Motion by Rich Luby to table the vote until the August board meeting. Seconded by Corey Lee.</p>



	<p>ACTION: Motion carried.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Meeting: The Executive Committee recommended scaling back the annual meeting due to budget constraints, proposing a smaller event with refreshments and awards for key contributors. <p>Motion by Mark Linabury to scale back the September annual meeting, with final details to be presented at the August board meeting. Melissa Thompson seconded.</p> <p>Action: Motion carried unanimously.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Retreat: The Executive Committee recommended postponing the board retreat until there is more clarity on federal funding and organizational direction. <p>Motion by Rich Luby to postpone the board retreat until more clarity is available on budget and strategic direction. Mark Linabury seconded.</p> <p>Action: Motion carried unanimously.</p>
<p>Finalize CT SILC Tagline</p>	<p>Two tagline finalists from the prior meeting were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Independence for People with Disabilities Through Advocacy, Access, and Action. 2. Turning Disability into Possibility. <p>The consensus of the board was that more time should be taken to refine the tagline to better reflect CT SILC’s vision and mission.</p> <p>Motion by Rich Luby to table adoption of a new tagline until a future meeting to allow for further review and refinement. Mark Linabury seconded.</p> <p>Action: Motion carried unanimously.</p>
<p>Committee Reports</p>	<p>SPIL COMMITTEE – Chris Blake</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee is using the SPIL evaluation form developed earlier this year. • There is concern that the SPIL may need to be rewritten due to potential changes in federal funding, creating uncertainty about future plans. • Work continues on current SPIL goals, with regular reporting helping to track progress. • Noted the importance of aligning committee work with current funding realities and strategic goals. <p>EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE – Kim Smith</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee did not meet last month; next meeting is scheduled for tomorrow. • Attempting to coordinate a statewide training with the American Red Cross, but local contact has stopped responding. Board members offered alternative contacts. • Gretchen Knauff shared an article noting low sign-up rates for CT Alerts among Connecticut residents. Suggestions include sharing information on social media and websites to encourage sign-ups.



	<p>DATA TECH COMMITTEE – Eileen Healy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress has been made in standardizing disability categories and aligning goals across centers. • Definitions for goals are being refined, and the new Program Performance Report (PPR) is being reviewed for potential impacts. • Active goals and reporting issues are being addressed, ensuring consistency in data collection. • The committee plans to focus next on services after finalizing goals. • The committee continues to meet regularly, bringing together CILs to improve data-sharing strategies and collaboration.
<p>Announcements</p>	<p>ADA Commemoration – July 30, 2025 – Legislative Office Building –1 to 3 PM Event will be held to recognize the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Board members and stakeholders are encouraged to attend and help promote the event within their networks.</p>
<p>Adjourn</p>	<p>The meeting adjourned at 4:55 PM.</p>