



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

**Wednesday, April 15, 2026
3:00 PM**

Board Members Present: Gretchen Knauff, Chris Blake, Melissa Cullen-Carter, Farrah Garland, Corey Lee, Mark Linabury, George Michna*, Jaclyn Pinney, Darrell Ruopp, Kim Smith, Melissa Thompson-Dooley, Emily Zambrello

Board Members Absent: Rich Luby, Michelle Johnson

Candidates in Waiting: Marc Anthony Gallucci

Candidates in Waiting Absent: Joe Shortt

***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 |
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| Call to Order | The meeting was called to Order at 3:05 pm - Quorum established. |
| Welcome and Introductions | Gretchen Knauff welcomed board members and guests to the meeting and expressed appreciation for everyone attending on a beautiful spring afternoon. She noted that the agenda included several important discussions related to CT SILC operations, federal funding updates, REV UP activities, annual meeting planning, and upcoming board elections. |
| Good News | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Molly shared that CT SILC received its Notice of Award, providing reassurance regarding current funding and alleviating concerns created by delays in federal communications. • George reported participating in discussions with leadership from the Administration for Community Living (ACL), including Commissioner Becky Hines and other national partners. He shared that Connecticut's Independent Living network is being viewed as a model for other states, particularly regarding transition services, family engagement, and collaborative initiatives. He noted there is interest in continuing conversations and potentially bringing national partners to Connecticut. • Eileen shared that during transition-related discussions with national partners, Connecticut was recognized as being significantly ahead of many other states in effectively engaging Independent Living Centers as partners in transition services and community supports. • Kim announced that she will become a first-time grandmother in August and shared her excitement about welcoming a granddaughter. • Gretchen shared that she is expecting another grandchild within the next several weeks and reflected on the joy grandchildren bring to families. |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emily reported that Community First Choice remains off the legislative chopping block for now, representing positive news for disability advocacy efforts during the current legislative session. |
| Public Comment | There was no public comment. |
| Approval of Minutes from March 18, 2026 | <p>Motion to accept the minutes by Corey Lee. Melissa Thompson-Dooley seconded.</p> <p>During discussion, Gretchen Knauff noted that Joe Shortt should be listed as a guest rather than a board member, as his appointment had not yet been finalized at the time of the meeting. Discussion followed regarding pending board appointments and the proper categorization of prospective board members.</p> <p>An amendment was offered to revise the minutes by moving Joe Shortt and Marc Anthony Gallucci into a "candidates in waiting" category rather than listing them as board members.</p> <p>MOTION TO AMEND: Melissa Thompson-Dooley moved to amend the minutes to reflect the revised categorization. Corey Lee seconded the amendment.</p> <p>ACTION: Motion to accept the minutes with the amendments were approved. Melissa Cullen-Carter and Kim Smith abstained as they were not present at March meeting.</p> |
| Treasurer's Report | <p>Mark Linabury presented the Financial Report Summary for the period ending March 31, 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CT SILC reported a net income of approximately \$24,518 year-to-date. Due to continuing uncertainty surrounding Part B funding for SILCs and CILs, financial activity remains limited in several program areas. The bank account has been reconciled through March 31, 2026, without issues. CT SILC's financial position remains stable despite ongoing federal funding concerns. The organization continues to maintain sufficient resources to meet current obligations while monitoring expenditures carefully until additional funding guidance is received. Mark noted that the report was very similar to the previous month's report due to limited financial activity and ongoing funding uncertainty. <p>No formal vote required for the Treasurer's Report.</p> |
| Discussion of Federal funding, budget issues | <p>Molly Cole reported that CT SILC received its Notice of Award, which allows outstanding invoices currently at ADS to be paid. She noted that, while this is good news, there are still significant unknowns related to the federal budget and future funding. Molly explained that the President's proposed budget is not expected to be the final budget and that, because this is an election year, there may be a continuing resolution rather than a final budget by October 1.</p> <p>Discussion focused on the need for CT SILC to remain cautious with spending. Molly reported that the Finance Committee recommends keeping limits on discretionary spending and avoiding unnecessary use of reserves. SPIL related activities will continue to be funded, as those are required activities. However, other expenses,</p> |



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| | <p>including conference attendance, will be limited. Molly reported that CT SILC will support Melissa Thompson-Dooley attending the NCIL conference, along with her PCA, and Molly will also attend. Molly noted she plans to take the train to reduce travel costs.</p> <p>Board members discussed the importance of continuing to monitor federal funding, Medicaid, SNAP, and related policy changes, as these may affect people with disabilities and the work of CT SILC and the Centers for Independent Living (CILs).</p> |
| <p>Executive Director’s Report</p> | <p>Molly Cole gave the Executive Director’s report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations: Molly reported that CT SILC received two additional payments toward the Candidates Forum, including \$1,000 from CACIL and \$1,000 from Aging CT. Fundraising for the Candidates Forum continues. Molly also reported that the Q90 contract between OILP and Q90 has now been signed. This will allow the project officer to begin reviewing Program Performance Reports. The CILs are expected to receive feedback first, possibly by the end of May, with CT SILC feedback expected later. • Projects and Initiatives: Molly reported that the Connecticut Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance continues to focus on disability-related legislative priorities. CT SILC co-sponsored a March 5 press conference with ADAPT and assisted with a second Capitol event on March 25. Key issues included Community First Choice, Supported Decision Making, DDS IQ eligibility, and other disability-related bills. Molly also reported that, following advocacy efforts, the Governor stated that the state would not pursue cuts to Community First Choice at this time. <p>Molly reported that accessibility issues at the Capitol were discussed with legislative management after Sandra Roberts experienced a serious fall. Concerns included inaccessible steps, an unsafe temporary ramp, the need for visual warning strips, access to the better ramp at Capitol 310, and automatic door openers for hearing rooms. Molly reported that follow-up will continue, including requesting timelines for needed accessibility improvements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported Decision Making (SDM): Molly reported that House Bill 5485 has twenty-five co-sponsors, but additional co-sponsors are still needed. Discussion focused on the bill being referred to Appropriations due to a fiscal note, even though the bill itself does not require funding to pass. Gretchen explained that language related to available appropriations created concerns, and that the section may need to be removed to keep the bill moving. Members discussed opposition from the hospital, banking, and bar associations, as well as continued advocacy to refute concerns and move the bill forward. <p>Board members were encouraged to review the bill tracking information and contact their legislators if they are not already co-sponsors. Molly and Gretchen noted that Senator Looney has been supportive and that additional legislative outreach may be needed if the bill advances. Kim Smith shared that DDS recently included Supported Decision Making in a presentation, and Molly reported that families and providers are increasingly asking for SDM materials. Marc Anthony requested additional SDM booklets for his Center.</p> |



- **Southbury Coalition:** Molly reported that the Southbury Coalition continues to work toward closure of Southbury Training School. The coalition discussed the need to tour the facility to better understand current conditions. Disability Rights Connecticut declined to sponsor the tour, but Jordan Scheff agreed to arrange one. Molly reported that he also expressed interest in meeting to discuss related issues. Discussion focused on the need for a date certain for closure and the importance of building community resources to support people leaving Southbury. Gretchen noted concern that people continue to leave Southbury primarily through death rather than transition, which remains unacceptable.
- **Candidates Forum:** Molly reported that planning for the Candidates Forum is moving forward. Staff met with catering staff to obtain food estimates so CT SILC can seek sponsorships for specific food costs. The venue will not charge CT SILC for exhibitor tables, which will allow exhibitor fees to support the event. Molly reported that CT SILC did not receive the additional \$10,000 REV UP grant, but REV UP approved the use of the previously awarded \$8,500 toward the Candidates Forum. To date, approximately \$51,000 has been raised.

Molly reported that Diane Smith is confirmed as the moderator. CT SILC plans to include VoteRiders, voter registration, the accessible ballot marker, exhibitors, and other activities to make the forum more engaging and encourage in-person attendance. Transportation remains a concern, and CT SILC is looking for accessible transportation options or sponsors to help increase attendance. Board members discussed the importance of having people attend in person because candidates are more responsive when they see an audience.
- **Outreach:** Molly reported that CT SILC has ordered REV UP voter outreach materials and is waiting for them to arrive. Molly and Michele are scheduled to attend several community table events over the next few months. CT SILC will share REV UP materials, CT SILC materials, and Supported Decision Making information at those events.

Board members engaged in discussion following the Executive Director’s report, including questions and comments related to funding status, legislative priorities, and ongoing advocacy initiatives.

Committee Reports:

DATA TECH COMMITTEE: Eileen Healy

- The committee continues to focus on improving the quality, consistency, and usefulness of consumer case notes across the Centers for Independent Living.
- Eileen reported that planning continues for a statewide training with Dr. Jen. The training will focus on writing stronger case notes, documenting consumer goals, and ensuring documentation accurately reflects consumer progress and outcomes.
- Committee members believe the training will help improve reporting quality and create a more consistent approach to documentation across Centers.
- Discussion emphasized the importance of quality case notes in demonstrating Independent Living outcomes and supporting future reporting requirements.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: Kim Smith

- Kim reported that Emergency Envelope training has been scheduled for April 23,



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| | <p>2026, from 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM. Participation will be required for all Centers for Independent Living.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The training will focus on the use of emergency preparedness envelopes and how they can assist individuals with disabilities during emergency situations. • Molly reported that CT SILC continues to work with the Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies (PIDS) to coordinate a shelter-in-place training expected later this spring or early summer. • A proposal has been received from PIDS and CT SILC is awaiting final contract details and confirmation of training dates. <p>SPIL COMMITTEE: Chris Blake</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chris reported that the SPIL Committee had not met and he did not have a formal report. • Molly noted that CT SILC is beginning work on SPIL input for the next State Plan for Independent Living. • Molly reported that public input will need to begin soon and may include in-person opportunities at each CIL, email distribution, online postings, and hard-copy surveys at outreach events. • Molly asked members to think about non-traditional places and partners where CT SILC could gather input from people with disabilities, including areas such as paratransit, housing, recreation, and other community settings. • Molly emphasized the importance of broad and robust input, so the next SPIL reflects the needs of the people CT SILC and the CILs are responsible for serving. <p>BOARD RECRUITMENT: Darrell Ruopp/Michele DuBois for Rich Luby</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michele reported that the committee was scheduled to meet the following day and continues to focus on identifying potential Board candidates from across the disability community. • No completed applications have been received since the previous meeting. • The committee discovered a technical issue with the online application form. The original form was replaced and recreated using a different platform. The new application process has been tested and is functioning properly. • Darrell reported that recruitment information was distributed to approximately fifty disability and community organizations with a request that the opportunity be shared within their networks. • Committee members discussed expanding outreach efforts and continuing follow-up with organizations to increase awareness of Board opportunities. • The committee remains focused on strengthening Board representation and identifying candidates with diverse experiences and perspectives. |
| <p>REV UP: CT SILC's role in Get Out The Vote initiatives in 2026</p> | <p>Gretchen Knauff led a discussion regarding CT SILC's role in REV UP and voter engagement activities for 2026. Molly reported that CT SILC is coordinating voter education, voter registration, and accessible voting outreach activities throughout the year. Members discussed opportunities to partner with community organizations and continue promoting voter participation among people with disabilities.</p> <p>Discussion included the use of materials from the Secretary of the State's office, accessible voting information, and outreach resources that can be tailored to</p> |



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| | <p>different audiences. Members emphasized the importance of continuing voter education efforts and increasing awareness of accessible voting options available throughout Connecticut.</p> |
| <p>Discussion: Annual Meeting, Guest speakers and topics, Virtual/In Person</p> | <p>Annual Meeting: The Board discussed planning for the September Annual Meeting. Members agreed that planning should begin soon to allow sufficient time for securing a location, developing an agenda, and identifying speakers. Discussion focused on creating an event that is engaging and meaningful for attendees while highlighting the work of CT SILC and the Independent Living Network.</p> <p>Guest Speakers and Topics: Board members discussed potential speakers and presentation topics for the Annual Meeting. Members expressed interest in featuring speakers who can address current disability policy issues, advocacy efforts, and emerging concerns affecting people with disabilities. The Board also discussed highlighting success stories and accomplishments from the Independent Living Network.</p> <p>Virtual / In-Person: The Board discussed whether the Annual Meeting should be held virtually, in person, or in a hybrid format. Members expressed a preference for holding the meeting in person whenever possible, noting the value of networking, relationship building, and increased engagement. The Board agreed to continue exploring accessible and affordable venue options before making a final decision.</p> |
| <p>Elections in September: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary</p> | <p>Gretchen reminded members that officer elections will be held during the September Annual Meeting. The positions of President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary will be open for election. Discussion focused on leadership succession planning and the importance of identifying interested candidates early to support a smooth transition and continued leadership for the Council. Additional information regarding officer roles, nominations, and the election process will be shared prior to the Annual Meeting.</p> |
| <p>Adjourn</p> | <p>Motion to adjourn by Melissa Thompson-Dooley; second by Mark Linabury. Adopted unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 4:39 PM</p> |