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CONTACT: Mike Roth
(916) 444.7170

CALIFORNIA INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS TAKE GOVERNOR TO COURT

DISABILITY COMMUNITY SUES TO HALT DEVASTATING IMPACT OF ILLEGAL BLUE PENCIL CUTS

SACRAMENTO, CA – Representing people with disabilities across California who will be impacted by Governor Schwarzenegger’s illegal line-item vetoes to the 2009-10 budget revision, the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (CFLIC) and a coalition of community healthcare and disability support agencies today sued the Governor to stop the “blue pencil” cuts.

“People with disabilities brought this lawsuit because we are the people who will have to live with the results of the Governor’s illegal cuts that take away the independence we’ve fought hard to secure,” said Teresa Favuzzi, CFLIC’s Executive Director. “This lawsuit demonstrates that the disability community will stay strong and fight for our right to live independently in our communities, even as the Governor makes illegal and unconscionable cuts on top of the most devastating state budget agreement we’ve ever seen.”

Just as the nation celebrates the 10th anniversary the historic Olmstead ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court which affirmed the right of people with disabilities to live independently and integrated in communities, the deep cuts in July’s budget agreement and the Governor’s illegal vetoes would strip away these basic rights. These cuts mean individuals with disabilities who are currently living in the community, are at risk of being institutionalized in nursing homes, and makes obtaining and maintaining education and employment impossible.

Because many people with disabilities rely on a combination of state programs to meet their most basic needs, the disability community is harmed many times over by the cuts made in the budget agreement and by the Governor’s illegal blue-pencil reductions:

- Cuts to the In-Home Supportive Services Program mean people with disabilities will go without home care or will have to shoulder the burden of paying for services out-of-pocket.
- Medi-Cal cuts strip health care services
- Elimination of cost of living adjustments for the SSI/SSP program mean low-income seniors and people with disabilities have less money to pay for food, rent, and utilities.
- Local budget cuts impact the disability community with fee increases for Paratransit services and reductions in housing assistance.

“People with disabilities courageously campaigned for a state budget that protects our right to live independently in our homes, to access services in our communities, and to receive basic healthcare. The Governor doesn’t have the right to take our independence away,” Favuzzi concluded.

Joining CFLIC in the lawsuit are Disability Rights Advocates, St. John's Well Child and Family Centers, Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, Western Center on Law and Poverty and Kirkland and Ellis LLP.

The California Foundation for Independent Living Centers, based in Sacramento, Calif., is a statewide, non-profit trade organization made up of 25 Independent Living Centers. Through unified action, CFILC envisions civil rights for all people with disabilities. CFILC's mission is to support independent living centers in their local communities through advocating for systems change and promoting access and integration for people with disabilities.

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