

**Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation of Kansas  
Guided Independent Living Assessment (GILA) Program**

**March 5, 2025**

**To: Senate Committee on Ways & Means**

**From: Patrick Jonas, CEO (CPRFK)**

Chairman Billinger, Vice Chair Claeys, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways & Means, I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation of Kansas (CPRFK) and our Guided Independent Living Assessment Program.

I would like to give you a very brief history of this new program which has shown increased demand and is unavailable anywhere else in the country to our knowledge. Our program serves those young adults with disabilities who are often graduates from special education programs, are unserved, and who could very easily end up vying for waiver services or other forms of public assistance. Our goal is to promote self-sufficiency with the opportunity for true independence.

For nearly 50 years, CPRFK has overseen a HUD section 8 accessible housing development designed for those with physiological or neurological disabilities. I have been contacted on numerous occasions over the years by parents of young disabled adults, wanting to know if their loved one could TRY to live at our facility because they were uncertain whether or not they were ready to successfully do so. HUD will not allow such a trial as they do not want to take away a housing spot from someone who is prepared to move in. Therefore, I researched the State of Kansas, the Midwest, and even sent staff to Florida to evaluate a program that we thought might be an option to answer the question that the parents kept asking: 'Is my disabled young adult ready to live on his or her own?' Despite our efforts, we could not find one.

Because we were in the process of renovating our residential facility, my board allowed me to build two new apartments (outside of HUD) with the primary purpose of designing a program to answer the question that so many parents were asking. After several focus groups with parents, we formed our Guided Independent Living Assessment (GILA) program which does just that. A six-week program on our campus where young adults with disabilities are assessed for readiness in community and home safety, cooking/shopping/public transportation, housekeeping, money and planning, healthy relationships/communication, and personal self-care/advocacy and emotional management.

We partnered with the Independent Living Resource Center in Wichita to assist with consulting and training. We have also worked closely with Wichita State University to develop a measurable assessment tool that allows us to track the efficacy of the program and collect feedback from participants and parents which assists in directing modifications to the program for continuous improvement. (Conclusive Highlights from WSU for the first 26 clients are attached).

To date, 37 clients have participated in the program, 30 completed the 6-week assessment and 10 are now living on their own. All clients and parents are given an objective review of progress and goals written with direction to other community services where advances can be made to improve upon specific areas of need.

CPRFK has invested over \$500,000 over the last two and a half years in this new program and is at a point where continuation may not be feasible without State assistance.

Because of its proven value to many families with young adults with disabilities and the opportunities generated by advancing self-determination, independence, and a life of self-sufficiency for those young adults, we are respectfully requesting that the State of Kansas assist in funding this program as a pilot project at \$215,000 annually for three years. It is proposed that this program would be a pilot under the Department for Children and Families, Vocational Rehabilitation, and reporting would be directed as requested.

I wish to thank you once again, Chairman Billinger and members of the Committee, for your time and this consideration.

# CONCLUSIVE HIGHLIGHTS



- The GILLA program has shown a statistically significant improvement in participants' self-determination, ability to set and attain goals, understating of their own emotions, abilities, and limitations, beliefs about their opportunities for autonomy and decision-making, and awareness and understanding of their own strengths.
- Program completers demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in their ability to perform independent living skills pertaining to healthy relationships and communication, housekeeping and clothing care, personal self-care, cooking, meal preparation, and food storage, and personal safety and transportation.
- Program completers reported increased independence and confidence. They shared positive successful experiences of advocating for themselves when interacting with roommates, friends, family, colleagues, and strangers. They also indicated the program's effectiveness in exposing them to new independent living skills while providing support and guidance.
- Program completers demonstrated an increased awareness of community services and supports that they may need to live on their own.
- Majority of program completers lived away from their parents/caregivers' home or were taking steps to live independently. Most of those who could work and had a job before entering GILLA were able to secure employment and/or maintained a job after program completion.
- Parents/caregivers viewed their child as somewhat ready to live independently and felt somewhat comfortable and somewhat worried about letting the GILLA participant live independently before and after the program completion.
- Parents/caregivers found the GILLA program crucial in increasing participant's independence and confidence. They noted newfound self-advocacy and improved communication and coping skills. They also emphasized participant improved understanding of their ability to live independently and necessary supports and services.