

# Idaho State Independent Living Council

## 2024 Annual Report

(October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024)



Photo Credit: Tara Rowe, Twin Falls Idaho



# Who Makes Up the Idaho SILC

## Idaho State Independent Living Council Members

Brittany Shipley.....	Council Chair - Parent Advocate - Region V
Shiloh Blackburn.....	Vice-Chair -Region VI Person with a Disability
Justyne Collins.....	Region I Person with a Disability
Erik Kimes.....	Region III Person with a Disability
Ian Bott.....	Region IV Person with a Disability
Tara Rowe.....	Region V Person with a Disability
Faith Neibert.....	Region VII Person with a Disability
Anhora Snodgrass.....	At Large Person with a Disability - Region II
Kylie Reed.....	At Large Person with a Disability - Region IV
Sherri Boelter.....	CIL Representative - Disability Action Center NW
Michael Lefevor.....	CIL Director
Brianna Tamayo (Resigned 7/29/24).....	CIL Representative - Life, A Center for Independent Living
Tara Marie Adams (Resigned 6/23/24).....	At Large Person with a Disability - Region IV
Ex-Officio Members	
Beth Cunningham.....	Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Alan Aamodt.....	Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Erin Olsen.....	Idaho Commission on Aging
Russell Salyards.....	Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
Steve Achabal (Termed off 5/28/24).....	Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

## Idaho State Independent Living Council Staff

Mel Leviton.....	Executive Director
Jami Davis.....	Program Specialist
Megan Bates.....	Financial Specialist
Janey Bruesch.....	Administrative Assistant II

# Idaho SILC Mission

The State Independent Living Council (SILC) is Idaho's only statewide, cross-disability organization dedicated to independent living and full community inclusion governed by a majority of people with disabilities in service to people with disabilities across the lifespan.



2024 Idaho SILC members and staff

## **Mission:**

We elevate the voices of people with disabilities, breaking down systemic barriers to inclusion and integration through advocacy and enhancing the ability of Idahoans with disabilities to live independently, direct their lives and strengthen their communities.

## **Vision:**

We envision an Idaho where disability is respected as a natural part of the human experience and people with disabilities are included and valued.



# Meet People Where They Are

We strive not to be defined by our disabilities, though others often define us by perceived and real limitations. Systems demand that people with disabilities meet a clear definition for a specific disability to gain access to services and support, including financial and medical assistance. We live a constant contradiction of proving we are worthy and productive enough, while also proving we are disabled enough to access the services, supports and resources that we need.

Support and services are not limited to home health care providers. Nor are they limited to social safety net programs. No two people with the same or similar disability are alike. Each disabled person is an expert in what they need to live fully in their community.

At least 25% of every community - ethnicity, color, identity, age and socioeconomic group - have a disability. Some communities, due to health and economic disparities include greater percentages of disabled people. The walls we create are the real barrier to inclusion and understanding. The SILC is involved in all sectors of community life: housing and homelessness, criminal justice and survivor projects, public health, economic development and education. Our Council is made up of givers who participate in many organizations outside of traditional disability service agencies.

## Council Member Workgroups and Committees

The State Independent Living Council values connections within and outside of the disability community. Strengthening these bonds benefits Idahoans in every corner of the State. A few of the workgroups and committees Council members take part in are:

- Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia workgroup
- Central Idaho Coordinated Community Response Team
- Community NOW
- Idaho State Juvenile Justice Commission
- Magellan Family and Members Advisory Committee
- Housing Alliance and Community Partnership
- Idaho Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Coeur d'Alene
- State Behavioral Health Planning Council
- City of Pocatello Safe Streets workgroup
- St Alphonse Deaf & Hard of Hearing Advisory Board
- Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Project

# Looking Forward

### Goal #1

The Idaho IL Network will promote and advocate for the integration, inclusion and equity of Idahoans with disabilities across lifespan and cultures.

### Goal #2

The Idaho IL Network will work to strengthen effective network collaboration, leadership development and resources.

### Goal #3

Idahoans with disabilities receive the community-based supports and services they need to live in their community with greater independence.

The State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) is our three-year strategic plan that brings together the Idaho State Independent Living Council (SILC), the Network of Centers and our partners as we work collaboratively to advance the independence of people statewide across disabilities and lifespan. During the last Statewide Needs Assessment, we received input from 34 of the 44 counties in Idaho and took the comments to heart when developing the goals and objectives for the 2025-2027 Idaho SPIL.



# We Live in All Corners of Idaho\*

## Percentage of People with Disabilities by County

County	Percentage	County	Percentage
Ada	10.4%	Gem	19.6%
Adams	16.8%	Gooding	14.9%
Bannock	15.6%	Idaho	20.2%
Bear Lake	14.8%	Jefferson	10.2%
Benewah	20.7%	Jerome	12.5%
Bingham	16.1%	Kootenai	15%
Blaine	11%	Latah	11.8%
Boise	14.3%	Lemhi	21.2%
Bonner	16.6%	Lewis	25.3%
Bonneville	13.6%	Lincoln	13.8%
Boundary	16.7%	Madison	8.5%
Butte	18%	Minidoka	14.9%
Camas	19.5%	Nez Perce	18.2%
Canyon	14.6%	Oneida	15.9%
Caribou	11.8%	Owyhee	17.4%
Cassia	14.3%	Payette	16.7%
Clark	12.4%	Power	13.5%
Clearwater	20.5%	Shoshone	25.2%
Custer	25.1%	Teton	6%
Elmore	17.9%	Twin Falls	14%
Franklin	13.4%	Valley	13%
Fremont	17.5%	Washington	18.2%



Photo credit: Mel Leviton,  
Boise National Forest

\* U.S. Census Bureau, 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates Selected Population Data Profiles

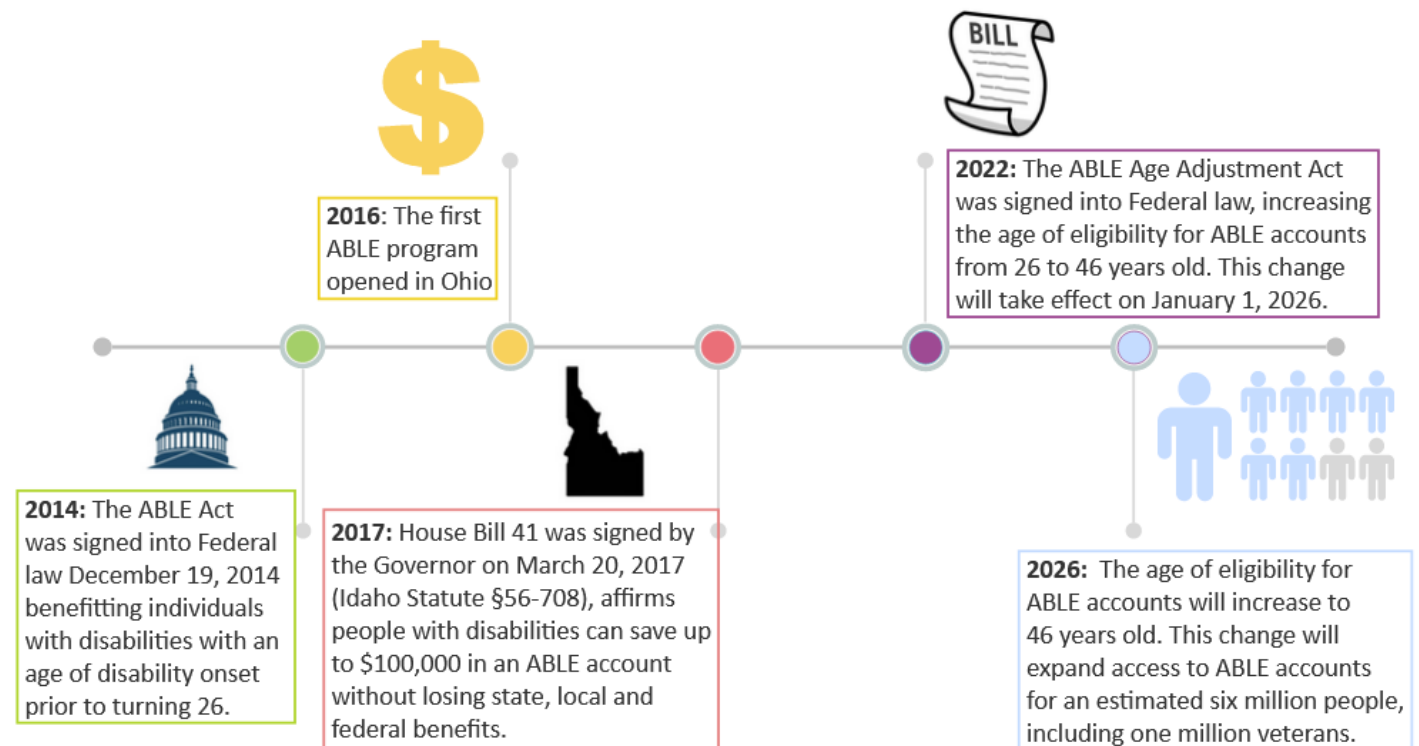
# ABLE in Idaho

## What is the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act?

ABLE is a federal law that allows people with eligible disabilities to save for their everyday needs and prepare for the future without losing their state or federal benefits.

## How can ABLE funds be spent?

- Personal support services
- Medical services
- Education and training
- Assistive technology
- Health, prevention and wellness
- Transportation
- Living expenses
- Employment training and support
- Final expenses



Since July 1, 2017, the SILC has provided one-on-one technical assistance to over 1200 Idahoans and provided outreach through workshops to more than 500 people.

The largest barrier to opening an account continues to be that Idaho does not have their own program.



# From the Chair

As Chair of the Idaho State Independent Living Council (SILC), I am thrilled to share the highlights of 2024. This year, we made significant strides in advocating for and supporting Idahoans with disabilities. From our extensive statewide outreach to addressing critical policy issues, our work has positively impacted individuals across all ages, demographics, and communities. By prioritizing equitable access to resources and care, we have strengthened our commitment to Idahoans with disabilities.

The Council played a pivotal role in advancing local, state, and federal policy discussions, focusing on critical issues such as ABLE Accounts, Idaho's Direct Care Workforce Shortage, and the low wages of caregivers. By advocating for direct care workers to be compensated appropriately for their caregiving roles, we highlighted the importance of supporting those who dedicate their lives to the well-being of loved ones with disabilities.

In a significant step toward accountability and reform, the SILC supported a bipartisan request under the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee for an investigation by the Office of Performance Evaluation into Idaho's children's residential facilities. This effort underscores our dedication to ensuring that the most vulnerable members of our community receive the quality care and oversight they deserve.

This year, the Council also grew its membership, welcoming diverse voices from across Idaho. By incorporating perspectives from a variety of geographical regions and experiences, we have strengthened our ability to address the unique needs of all Idahoans. Council members and staff further enriched their knowledge and advocacy skills by attending national and state conferences on topics ranging from domestic violence to rural independent living. These opportunities for learning and collaboration have allowed us to bring innovative ideas and best practices back to our work in Idaho.





Through partnership and collaboration, the SILC has continued to build a more inclusive and supportive environment for all. I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to every council member, staff member, and partner who contributed to our mission this year. Together, we are transforming lives, breaking barriers, and shaping a brighter future for Idahoans with disabilities.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Here's to continuing our important work in 2025 and beyond!

Brittany Shipley  
Chair, Idaho State Independent Living Council



# From the Director

The Idaho State Independent Living Council (SILC) successfully submitted our 2025-2027 State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) in June of 2024. The plan, approved by the Administration on Community Living, is the culmination of our statewide assessment, on-going quarterly reviews and years of building with the Centers for Independent Living (CILs) toward a plan that meets the needs of the people with disabilities across Idaho. The plan is a living document, not meant to collect dust on a shelf. I invite you to review it, ask questions, participate in local and statewide activities and help us make it matter. Without you, the plan is nothing more than words on a page.

Idaho Statute §56-1204(1) states that the Council shall... [among other things]

Assess the need for service for Idahoans with disabilities  
and advocate with decision makers

We will always advocate for full community inclusion and Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) for people with disabilities. Through 2024 and into 2025, we've seen an unprecedented increase in people with disabilities, from the very young to the very old, placed into institutions. Children with disabilities in foster care are more likely to be placed in congregate care than their non-disabled peers. People in their twenties and thirties as well as those who are older are increasingly entering skilled nursing and mental health facilities as their community living situations are plagued by increasing rents and decreasing direct support professionals. Once a person becomes homeless, it is harder to get them into housing; and getting out, is much harder than getting into an institution.



We've worked years to advance an Idaho ABLE savings program. The SILC has provided technical assistance and financial literacy training to people with disabilities and family members since 2017. We initiated an ABLE stakeholder group in 2023, and in 2024, we ramped up conversations with constituents and their families as well as Legislators and other elected officials. We're joined in this work by State Treasurer, Julie Ellsworth and excited to work with her and Legislators to bring ABLE legislation forward in 2025.

We invited legislators to our October 2023 Council meeting and welcome any who'd like to join us for future quarterly meetings. Our only ask of each other is to learn from one another; that policy makers better understand people with disabilities and that Council members learn that Legislators are people too. Our Council appreciates the time Legislators spent with us and look forward to more visits in 2025.

We are happy to report that our 2022, 2023 and 2024 audits have been completed, all with no findings. We faced challenges with our previous auditor toward the end of the public health emergency and are grateful to the Governor's office and Legislators for increasing our general fund to secure a well-qualified and responsive auditor. We keep meticulous financial records and maintain strict fiscal policies, ensuring appropriate review of expenditures prior to authorization and final approval of the executive director.

Our Council members, the majority of whom have disabilities, freely give of their time and expertise to serve. Council members do much more than come to quarterly meetings. They meet frequently in committees such as executive & finance, planning, policy and outreach as well as participating in local community organizations and activities. They meet with local, state and federal policy makers on issues of significance to people with disabilities. We've said goodbye to longtime Council members and welcomed new faces in recent months. We're excited to embrace the coming year with you by our side.

As I've previously said, Independent Living is not about who saves the day – It is about how we save the moment, with and for, each other.



Mel Leviton  
Executive Director





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**[silc.idaho.gov](http://silc.idaho.gov)**

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