



Cross Disability Coalition

AN INITIATIVE OF THE RHODE ISLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

December 29, 2010

Dear Governor Elect Chaffee,

Congratulations on your victory in the November 11th election. We recognize that you have a lot on your plate, but we would like to take this opportunity to introduce ourselves.

We are writing to you on behalf of the Cross Disability Coalition, an initiative of the RI Developmental Disabilities Council. The Coalition's mission is "to bring people with various types of disabilities together to share information, build partnerships, make connections, and unite as one on issues we think are important in our lives."

To date we have identified safe affordable housing, state budget cuts, transportation, and employment as areas that we feel impact the lives of people with disabilities. The Coalition feels that people with disabilities deserve a safe place to call home. Many individuals with disabilities have been on waiting lists for years. Due to the lack of accessible, affordable housing, there are many vacant buildings and foreclosed homes that could be used or renovated into accessible and affordable housing complexes. This would not only alleviate some of the housing shortages that we face, but would also open up multiple employment opportunities for Rhode Islanders in need.

Many people with disabilities have a strong desire to be part of the working populous. Unfortunately though, because we are on fixed incomes, and need our benefits to live, the threat of losing these benefits, due to financial gain prevents people from actively seeking employment.

There are many qualified individuals with disabilities who possess the skills and credentials to be employed, but employers are hesitant to hire us. Employers are not aware of various incentives to employ people with disabilities. If programming changes could be implemented, not only could individuals with disabilities have greater productivity, but our expertise could be utilized as well.

There are many obstacles we face with accessing transportation to get to work and other places. As a whole, we are very appreciative for the RIDE bus giving us our independence, but unfortunately, there is a downside. Sometimes the RIDE bus presents the challenge of getting individuals to destinations later than expected. The Coalition recognizes that unexpected circumstances may arise, but in terms of scheduling and

adding more service areas and routes, there is definitely room for improvement. If such changes are made, we would be more reliable employees and be employed longer without fear of being fired because of the lack of reliable transportation.

We understand there may be some budget cuts, and we really appreciate the services that are provided for us. Hopefully they will continue in the future for ourselves and new people coming into the system.

The members of the Coalition all face different circumstances and some of us have already seen some service changes. We are concerned about losing any staff hours. The waiting lists for ORS and DDD have increased, both in terms of new applications for services and for the assignment of case managers/counselors. For some of us, there is concern that further budget cuts will affect agencies that have become like family to those of us that have no families.

Thank you so much for taking the time in your very busy schedule to read this letter. We would love the opportunity to meet with you in person to further discuss how we can work together, and help you to better understand the needs of people with disabilities and those that we represent. Attached is an information flyer about the Cross Disability Coalition. If you can meet with us, we will bring a couple of large pizzas, so that we can share the slices of our lives with you!

Again thank you for your time. We are looking forward to having pizza with you.

Sincerely,

The Cross Disability Coalition
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