



April 13, 2020

Honorable Doug James Burgum, Governor
Office of the Governor
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Governor Burgum:

On April 2, 2020, we at the North Dakota Disabilities Advocacy Consortium, a statewide association of organizations who advocate for public policies that support people with disabilities across the lifespan, submitted a letter, enclosed, expressing our gratitude for your leadership during this public health emergency and offering our assistance in advancing a series of measures to guide medical and human service providers in securing the most appropriate services to individuals with disabilities across all ages, who deserve and require appropriate consideration for their unique needs, consistent with their secured civil rights.

Since issuing our letter, we have received encouraging initial communications from Mylynn Tufte, State Health Officer, and Chris Jones, Executive Director, Department of Human Services, both co-recipients of the letter, indicating an openness to consider further our April 2, 2020, recommendations. To date, no commitments regarding any tangible actions have been received. We are hopeful that both the Departments of Health and Human Services will (1) adopt and incorporate our recommendations within each respective agency's working protocols, (2) issue clear and consistent guidance, aligned with these recommendations, to all public and private service providers within their influence, and (3) communicate clear instructions to and further train all department staff on the importance of faithfully embodying these person-centered practices within their mission-critical duties.

In this regard, we respectfully request that you, on behalf of all state administrative agencies under your purview, **openly communicate to the citizens of North Dakota your directive to adopt the recommendations we identify in our April 2, 2020, letter, securing the statutory programs, procedural safeguards, and accorded civil rights of all individuals with disabilities across the lifespan, especially as it relates to person-centered practices and standards of care provided during this current emergency.** We respectfully request your written response confirming your commitment to adopt and implement these recommendations, thereby providing the guidance and assurance needed at this crucial time.

You have provided a great service to the state's citizens by scheduling daily briefings on the state's current standing and updating best practices regarding prevention, reporting, and care. **We believe that North Dakota citizens, especially our citizens with disabilities for whom we advocate, would benefit and be comforted greatly by hearing you and your agency leaders clearly and unequivocally reasserting, during**

periodic daily briefings, the procedural steps the state’s various agencies are taking to meet the unique needs of individuals with disabilities across all ages, specifically related to the issues we advance in our April 2, 2020, letter. We believe it is essential for the various administrative agencies to communicate directly with the public and private service providers they oversee to ensure a clear and consistent directive regarding these person-centered practices. The NDDAC extends its hand to you in assisting the state’s agencies in preparing specific daily briefings or guidance documents, as may be helpful. We are pleased to serve you, as always.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request. If you or any administrative agencies have questions regarding this request, we within NDDAC are willing to make ourselves readily available and to reach out and provide direct assistance to specific agency personnel. We wish you well and extend our ongoing support.

Sincerely,

Julie Horntvedt, Chairperson
North Dakota Disabilities Advocacy Consortium

Enclosure: NDDAC April 2, 2020, Letter

Member Organizations:

Advocates Leading their Lives
Designer Genes of ND, Inc.
Family Voices of North Dakota
Mental Health Advocacy Network
Mental Health America of North Dakota
Minot Housing Authority
ND Assistive
North Dakota Association of the Blind
North Dakota Association of Community Providers
North Dakota Association for Persons in Supported Employment
North Dakota Consumer Family Network
North Dakota Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health
North Dakota Protection and Advocacy Project
North Dakota State Council on Developmental Disabilities
The Arc of North Dakota