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The Honorable Robert F. McDonnell
Governor of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia 23218

December 8, 2010

Dear Governor McDonnell:

The Arc of Virginia thanks you for your stated commitment to move Virginia’s ID/DD system forward, as outlined in your November 23, 2010 letter to the General Assembly. We look forward to the implementation of the actions you identified. We also put forth the following recommendations that we believe are needed to promote and protect community-based services in Virginia. It is our sincere hope that the resulting “down payment” in the upcoming budget represents a major step forward in the civil rights of Virginians with developmental disabilities.

As you know, The Arc of Virginia is the Commonwealth’s oldest and largest advocacy organization for people with developmental disabilities and their families. It was The Arc families who, 55 years ago, established the first education programs for children with developmental disabilities. It was The Arc families, who for decades, fought for access to community-based supports so their sons and daughters would not be forced to live in state operated institutions. Today, we ask you to protect the core state services and supports that people with developmental disabilities and their families have fought so hard for, and improve access to the services that are still lacking.

Virginia has not fulfilled the promise of community integration for Virginians with developmental disabilities. More than 1,100 Virginians with developmental disabilities continue to be institutionalized in outdated and segregated state facilities. Over 6,400 Virginians with intellectual and related developmental disabilities continue to languish on waiting lists for community-based supports. Nearly 3,000 of these individuals are identified as being in “urgent need” for reasons such as living with an aging caregiver, aging out foster care, or imminent risk of homelessness. In the face of this crisis, the current budget provides no help to any waiting list families through June 30, 2012.

Despite our being 8th in per capita income, Virginia is ranked 46th for its fiscal effort towards community-based services for Virginians with developmental disabilities. In addition to its lengthy waiting lists and continued practice of institutionalization, Virginia’s existing community services are known for being chronically underfunded. Virginia’s reimbursement rates for home and community-based waiver programs have not kept pace with inflation, and as a result, our service system is behind the rest of the country.

To put it simply, Virginia cannot sustain the cuts and policies contained in the current budget.

The Arc of Virginia urges you to protect existing HCBS Waiver services and supports, which are scheduled to be cut on July 1, 2011, by taking the following actions in the 2010-2012 Introduced Budget:

- Elimination of the 5% cut in reimbursement rates for HCBS Waiver programs
- Elimination of the 2/3 reduction in respite hours for families receiving HCBS Waiver services
- Elimination of the reductions in assistive technology and environmental modification

Furthermore, The Arc of Virginia requests that you to take action to end the ID and IFDDS Waiver waiting list crisis, beginning with the following actions:

- Removal of budget language that eliminates 400 new ID Waivers and 67 new IFDDS Waivers in FY12, honoring the promise made to people with developmental disabilities and their families in § 32.1-323.2
- Inclusion of funding for 800 new ID Waivers and 165 new IFDDS Waivers to further aid waiting list families
- Provision of \$5 million in support services for 1,000 people who are also waiting because they have been denied access due to level of functioning

Finally, The Arc of Virginia joins countless other local, state and national organizations in calling for an end to Virginia's antiquated practice of institutionalizing people with developmental disabilities. We request that you:

- Support the Virginia Alliance for Community's Call for Reform
- Charge the Commission on Government Reform and Restructuring with the responsibility of looking at the Training Centers
- Establish a comprehensive plan to transition to a community-based system of support
- Reinvest cost savings to assure successful transitions, maintain existing services and provide support to those who are waiting

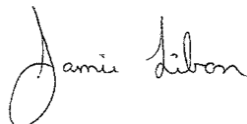
If action is not taken to sustain and strengthen the community-based safety net, thousands of Virginians may be at risk of losing their homes, jobs and lives in the community. Please prevent Virginia from taking a huge step backwards in the civil rights movement for Virginians with developmental disabilities. **It is time to fulfill the promise of community and end the segregation of people with developmental disabilities.** Virginia has waited long enough.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Howard Cullum
President



Jamie Liban
Executive Director

CC:

The Honorable Lacey Putney, Chair, House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Charles Colgan, Chair, Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable William Hazel, Secretary of Health and Human Resources

The Honorable Richard Brown, Secretary of Finance

Mr. Gregg Pane, Director, Department of Medical Assistance Services

Mr. James Stewart, Commissioner, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services