



December 9th, 2020

Dear Governor Jay Inslee and the Ruckelshaus Legislative Taskforce:

We the self-advocate Coalition and the broader DD Partners are writing to you today about your proposal to build a new 120 bed nursing facility on the Fircrest campus. We strongly believe that building a new dedicated I/DD nursing facility is sending us backwards in time. For the past 20+ years self-advocates and the DD partners have worked on moving people out of segregated institutional settings back into the community. While we acknowledge that Hospitals and Nursing facilities are needed in communities, we need to make sure these localities are used for temporary rehabilitation situations and not a place to move people in permanently especially those with I/DD.

The Coalition strongly recommends our State to invest their money in creating more community based residential options. For example, depending on people's required health and behavior service needs, we feel that State Operated Living Alternatives, Adult Family Homes, Companion Homes, and other Community placements are good options. The Coalition will be willing to advocate and work to build in additional services to these options that the Taskforce sees as lacking. We also encourage instead of building one central I/DD nursing facility that is costly and will reduce community funding, you would be wiser to build out more community options. For example, making sure each regional area has an adequate number of State Operating Living Alternatives.

The Coalition also believes that when we strengthen home care and medical care in the person's home, it can help reduce the need for individuals to be placed in congregate settings. As the Current COVID 19 pandemic statistics have shown people living in congregate settings are at a far higher risk of dying or being hospitalized than those living in smaller home settings. In addition, people who remain in their own home in the community feel that they have more independence and choices in their life. Therefore, the Coalition believes that we need to grow and improve in home care and respite services and not instead use some of the Developmental Disability Administration Budget to build long term I/DD specific facilities that will most likely reduce the budget for community services.

Finally, the Coalition believes that regional nursing homes used for the general disability population should be allowed to serve all those with I/DD and not just some. We feel that if we can educate the nursing staff at these facilities on additional techniques they can care temporarily for everyone with I/DD as the State looks for a community placement such as a State operated Living Alternative. It is our belief that when this State makes sure there are enough community residential options and community services in every community, all people with I/DD can live successfully in their community.

Sincerely,

Allies in Advocacy  
Arc of Washington  
Disability Rights Washington  
People First of Washington  
Self-Advocates in Leadership (SAIL)  
Washington State Developmental Disability Council  
Washington State Developmental Disability Ombuds