



Dear Secretary Meneses:

We thank you for meeting with leaders in our community to discuss your plans to hire for the next Assistant Secretary for the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). This position is critical to creating a system that opens access to and creates new community-based services and supports for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in our state.

DDA has experienced years of struggle due to chronic underfunding and lack of innovation. The legislature has repeatedly asked and needs answers to what services people with developmental disabilities and their families need to lead meaningful and inclusive lives, and what the costs are so legislators can plan for and invest in a future that is secure for people with developmental disabilities and their families. We need a strong leader who can gain the trust of the legislature, deliver detailed short-term and long-term strategic plans and proactively advocate for our community’s needs.

The next leader in this position must embrace a disability justice framework, have experience dismantling a system that over-relies on crisis-driven institutional care, and removes barrier after barrier to services our system must provide. We need an innovator and someone who believes in the community’s values.

DDA already has a well-crafted values statement that needs significant resources to become reality. It can be found here:

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/DDA/dda/documents/DDA%20Guiding%20Values%20Booklet.pdf>

This is our opportunity to create what the DD community needs. We have included with this letter the tenants of the Community Advocacy Coalition (CAC), a group of over 40 organizations that represent, serve and support people with developmental disabilities in the community (Page 5). We believe in these values and want to ensure they are used to guide the recruitment process. In addition to CAC members, we have also invited individuals and other organizations in our community to sign on below.

Thank you for your commitment to ensure this new leader understands the principles of equity, belonging, and social justice. We also thank you for your assurance to involve the community in this process so that those most affected by the leadership in this position are included in the selection process.

Secretary Meneses, we look forward to this collaboration in the hiring process and we ask that you work with stakeholders, including **parents, self-advocates, other family members, providers, and other allies**, to make this next decision one of your best during your administration. Our community deserves to have a leader who will bring us into the next century and make Washington state a leader in services and supports for people with developmental disabilities. We feel it is about time and long overdue.

Respectfully,

Stacy Dym, Executive Director, The Arc of Washington State

Brandi Monts, Executive Director, Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council

Shawn Latham, Executive Director, Allies in Advocacy

Betty Schwieterman, Developmental Disabilities Ombuds

The following organizations and individuals signed on to this letter:



Association of County Human Services



COMMUNITY RESIDENTIAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION



OPEN DOORS
for MULTICULTURAL FAMILIES



Community Employment Alliance
Since 1974



Self Advocates in Leadership



King County
Champions Chapter



PEOPLE FIRST
of Washington



NorthwestCenter
People of all abilities



PEACE NW



Clark County
Parent Coalition



Kitsap
County
Parent
Coalition



OPTIONS
FOR SUPPORTED HOUSING



THURSTON / MASON
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY
COALITION



monica meyer
CONSULTING INC.

Adult Autism: Community Life and Assistive Technology



ROOTS OF INCLUSION



PARENT to PARENT



OLYMPIC
NEIGHBORS



Wee
CARE
coalition



SafeinHome.com



COMMUNITY HOMES



The Arc.
King County



The Arc.
of Spokane



The Arc.
Whatcom County



The Arc.
Grays Harbor



The Arc.
Snohomish County



The Arc.
Tri-Cities

Advocacy Partnership Project, Diana Stadden
Allies in Advocacy, Shawn Latham
Association of County Human Services DD Program Committee, Holly Woo
Benton Franklin Parent Coalition, Sharon Adolphsen
Community Employment Alliance, Courtney Williams
Community Homes, Cathy Murahashi
Community Residential Services Association, Scott Livengood
King County Champions Chapter (PFOW), Eric Matthes
Kitsap County Parent Coalition, Melia Hughes
Kittitas County Parent Coalition, Michelle Williams
Monica Meyer Consulting, Monica Meyer
Northwest Center, Laura Kneedler
Office of the Developmental Disabilities Ombuds, Betty Schwieterman
Olympic Neighbors, Bob Wheeler
Open Doors for Multicultural Families, Ginger Kwan
Options for Supported Housing, Kathy Streblo
PEACE NW, Darla Helt
People First of Washington (PFOW), Krista Milhofer
Roots of Inclusion, Jennifer Karls
Safe at Home, Peggy DiSalle
Self Advocates in Leadership (SAIL), Jessica Renner
The Arc of Grays Harbor, Jeff Meeks
The Arc of King County, Robin Tatsuda
The Arc of Snohomish County, Jamie Coonts
The Arc of Spokane, Sima Thorpe
The Arc of Tri-Cities, Cindy O'Neill
The Arc of Washington State, Stacy Dym
The Arc of Whatcom, Beverly Porter
Thurston County Developmental Disabilities Coalition, Michelle O'Dell

Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (WISE), Cesilee Coulsen

Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council, Brandi Monts

Washington State Parent to Parent, Tracie Hoppis

Wee Care Coalition, Lance Morehouse

Sandi Gruberg, Tacoma Parent Advocate

Darci Ladwig, Spokane Parent Advocate

Anthony Nash, Self-advocate

Katie Nash, Self-advocate

Zoe Osborne, Self-advocate

Jacob Pollowitz, Community Member

Margaret Lee Thompson, Redmond Parent Advocate

Many Voices/One Vision

Community Advocacy Coalition for People with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities

Core Values

Individuals with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) in Washington have much to contribute to the community, yet may need the support of families, advocates and government leadership to live a quality life. Our many voices join in unison for one common vision: a community of full participation.

Our statewide member organizations of the Community Advocacy Coalition (CAC) for people with I/DD represent the interests and goals of about 117,000 individuals, and their families and employees who support them in Washington State.

We collectively agree to the following principles, which we believe are core to full participation in every aspect of life. We want to ensure that these actions are an integral part of all planning and service delivery efforts for individuals with I/DD in Washington State. We affirm the following principles:

- **Full and Meaningful Life:** People with I/DD are equal members of society and have the right to a full and meaningful life of their choosing.

- **Self-Determination and Decision Making:** Individuals' choices and decisions must be supported and respected. Supported decision-making is preferred over taking away legal rights. Individuals with I/DD must be listened to, respected, have their rights protected and have their decisions honored based on the person's preferences. Every individual with I/DD or their family member should have access to opportunities to advocate for themselves.

- **Nothing About Us Without Us:** All individuals with I/DD must be part of all planning, governance, leadership and implementation of the programs which affect them. "Nothing about us without us." We also expect people to use respectful language and eliminate harmful, degrading labels.

- **Supporting Families:** For people with I/DD, the role of family is unique, and often central in the support and care provided across the lifespan. Family members play key roles in identifying and securing opportunities for their family members to participate within their community in meaningful ways and ensuring access to self-determined lives. Parents and other family members of people with I/DD often provide medical, behavioral, financial, and most other daily supports beyond what most families provide. Families need access to timely person-centered supports and services to protect the stability of the family and have equal access to full and rewarding lives.

- **Race, Equity, and Social Justice:** We are committed to ensuring that our healthcare, education and vital systems equitable for all. We acknowledge that individuals with I/DD who are black, people of color or of indigenous, immigrants or LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans, Queer or other identities) backgrounds also experience racism and other systemic discrimination challenges. Therefore, all of our work must be grounded in race, equity and social justice. We strive for equity and social justice for all individuals by reducing cultural, linguistic, and other barriers to information, education, and services as well as ensure access to accurate translations, interpreters with relevant training, and multiple formats for presentation of information.

- **Free from Abuse:** Individuals with I/DD have a right to live their lives free from abuse, neglect, exploitation or abandonment. Where abuse happens, it should be responded to promptly, effectively and respectfully and must not re-traumatize the person.
- **Restraints and Seclusion:** Restraints and seclusion for individuals with disabilities have no place in our society, including residential, educational, healthcare, and other settings. A positive behavior support model must be in place, where behavior is recognized as communication.
- **Accessibility: Communities should be accessible** and follow universal design principles including information, services, and environments. Technology should be affordable and accessible to support communication needs and plain language and closed captioning on videos should be used whenever possible. Individuals should have assistance to communicate in whatever form that is accessible and culturally responsive for them. All public buildings and services should be accessible, including timely, safe and affordable transportation.
- **Employment for Individuals with I/DD:** Meaningful careers provide economic stability and freedom. Everyone should have the opportunity to create a life that enriches the mind and spirit. Individuals need opportunities for meaningful jobs based on interest and skills, with minimum wage or higher pay that are up to 40 hours a week. People with I/DD contribute to our communities and the economy. People with I/DD in every community should have the supports to find integrated competitive employment in both urban and rural areas around the state. Individuals with I/DD have the right to direct financial decisions consistent with personal ambition, pursue careers that enable them to grow and be promoted, with work relationships that empower them, and employment supports that protect autonomy.
- **Provider workforce:** Paid caregivers support individual and family stability. Individuals who choose to work directly with people with I/DD must be provided opportunities to develop expertise and a pathway to pursue a professional career. They must be paid a living wage with competitive benefits, medical benefits, paid time off, opportunities for advancement and personal fulfillment. They should not have to work two or three jobs to support themselves or their families. This is essential work that must be valued and compensated accordingly.
- **Early Intervention:** Individualized quality early intervention supports and services must be affordable and accessible for all children with developmental delays or disabilities to maximize their social-emotional, physical, communication, adaptive or cognitive (or intellectual) development. Early intervention should take place and is most effective in inclusive settings and natural environments so that they can have a meaningful life and be full participants in their communities.
- **Childcare and Early Childhood Education:** Being meaningfully included in all facets of society begins in early childhood and continues into schools, places of employment, and the broader community. All children with I/DD and their families should have access to affordable, inclusive, high-quality early childhood education and child-care settings and the appropriate supports needed to be successful. Inclusive early learning and child-care can set a trajectory for inclusion across the life course.
- **Inclusive Education:** A free and appropriate public education (FAPE)—including early intervention, pre-school, K-12, transition planning, and higher education—must be

provided in inclusive settings with peers of the same age and include individualized supports to all students with I/DD to prepare them for full participation in our society.

- **Housing:** People with I/DD have the right to live in their local community and with whom they choose. Public funds must expand opportunities for people to live in accessible, affordable, inclusive communities. Without these opportunities, people with I/DD are at risk of institutionalization or homelessness. A home of one's own is the cornerstone of independence for people with disabilities.

- **Parenthood:** Parents with I/DD should have access to supports to raise their own families, rather than being subjected to enhanced scrutiny and loss of parental rights based on stereotypes. Parents with I/DD should have access to services tailored to their needs, offered in-home, and if needed, available throughout the development of the child.

- **Funding and Services:** All programs must be person-centered and provided in a way that supports individuals' unique needs. Medicaid and other public benefits are vital to individuals with I/DD. All public benefits must be protected and promote inclusion for individuals in their communities. Individuals should be educated and aware of all funding sources spent on them and be able to provide direction for all funds spent on their behalf. We recognize that many people with I/DD do not receive paid services, but we advocate for all individuals to have the services and supports they need to live full and meaningful lives.