April 24, 2020

Commissioner Judith M. Persichilli

New Jersey Department of Health

369 South Warren Street Trenton, New Jersey 08608

 Re: April 11, 2020 DOH Allocation of Critical Care Resources Guidance

Dear Commissioner Persichilli:

I write on behalf of the Alliance Center for Independence. Located in Edison, the Alliance Center for Independence (ACI) is one of 11 Centers for Independence located throughout NJ. We are a grass-roots non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, assisting over 3000 individuals and their families in Middlesex, Union and Somerset counties. Our mandate is serve all disabilities, including intellectual, mental health, physical and healthcare related disabilities. Many of the people we assist have autism. (I am a parent of young man with significate autism).

ACI, along with other disability organizations in NJ, have raised concerns and provided input regarding the Department of Health’s Allocation of Critical Care Resources During a Public Health Emergency (the Resource Allocation Plan), issued on April 11, 2020. Last week we shared these concerns with Governor Murphy’s staff.

Many of us in the disability community have questions about how the plan was developed prior to its issuance on April 11. Apparently, the Governor and the Department of Health solicited and obtained the advice form a professional advisory committee. ACI is concerned that the committee did not seek input from people with disabilities or their family members who have knowledge with these issues. Organizations, such as ours, that advocate for and work directly with disabled individuals every day were not asked to give input as well. Were there any members of the advisory committee representing the interests of people with disabilities or had a disability themselves. The inclusion of our concerns and suggestions should have been made a priority as the plan was worked on. Where they?

I ask you Commissioner Persichilli, who did serve on this advisory committee?

As an independent living center, we strongly adhere to the philosophy of “Nothing About Us Without Us.” A plan to allocate stretched to capacity healthcare resources that impact people with significant disabilities and other vulnerable populations must include input that represent those individuals’ interests.

Thank you very much and I look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Executive Director

Carole Tonks

732-738-4388

ctonks@adacil.org