**For Immediate Release**

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**Local Disability Community Commemorates Lives of Disabled Filicide Victims**

EDISON, NJ - As part of a nation-wide Day of Mourning, the Alliance Center for Independence (ACI), a non-profit center for independent living based in Edison will be holding a vigil on Friday March 1, to honor the lives of disabled people murdered by their families and caretakers.

This event is part of a nation-wide effort organized by the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN), a Washington, DC- based disability advocacy organization. ASAN has compiled a list of over 1300 reported murders of people with disabilities by relatives or caregivers over the last 40 years.

In the past 5 years, 570 people with disabilities have been murdered by their parents, relatives or caregivers, according to ASAN. The first filicide was in 2012. ACI has been holding its annual local filicide vigil since 2014.

“The purpose of this annual event is to mourn our brothers and sisters in disability but also bring public awareness to this often dismissed, yet tragic issue,” says Carole Tonks, ACI Executive Director and organizer of the event.

The total number of killings is likely higher than the amount which are reported in news

media. In many cases, news coverage presents these murders as the sympathetic acts of loving and desperate parents, by a justice system which often gives a lighter sentence to a parent who kills a disabled child, and by them dangerous cultural prejudice that says a disabled life is not worth living.

ASAN started to organize the vigils in response to the murder by his mother of George Hodgins, a 22-year-old autistic man from California.

Little public attention is paid to the disabled victims of these violent acts. Media coverage and public discourse about such killings frequently justify them as “understandable” and sometimes “merciful,” rather than appropriately condemning these crimes and those who commit them. The National Day of Mourning is a time for the disability community to commemorate the many lives cut short. By honoring disabled victims of murder and celebrating the lives that they lived, these vigils send a message that disability is not a justification for violence.

The vigil will begin at 6:00 PM in front of the ACI building, located at 629 Amboy Ave, Edison NJ. Participants will honor the victims by reading their names and sharing personal reflections. All are welcome to attend and join afterwards for conversation and coffee.

ACI offers a support group for parents of adult children with disabilities. For more information about this group and other ACI services, please contact 732-738-4388 or adacil.org.