



“Nothing More, Nothing Less for All People with Disabilities”

September 20, 2017

Chief Executive Officer

Chad W. Underwood

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Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

I am writing on behalf of the Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI) Board of Directors, staff, consumers, families, and caregivers to express vehement opposition to proposed changes to Federal Department of Education Regulations, including:

- Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Higher Education Act;
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); and
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) amending Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Over the past 50 years, the U.S. Congress has passed key federal laws that now provide civil rights to students, including those with disabilities. These laws have been upheld by the courts, regularly reauthorized, and consistently aligned to create unified federal policy. Furthermore, they provide a strong basis to promote and uphold equality and access to a public education for America's children, including those with disabilities.

Federal regulations and non-regulatory guidance help states and school districts fully implement the laws. They are critical to ensuring students with disabilities have the same opportunities as students without disabilities. Stakeholders rely on these authorities to assist them in understanding and complying with federal law. As such, none should be modified or rescinded by DeVos or the Trump Administration.

As a nonprofit Independent Living Center that serves people with disabilities in the Central New York area, including students and job seekers with disabilities, Access to Independence stands firmly in support of the laws listed above and their federal implementing regulations and non-regulatory guidance. These laws are essential to ensuring states and school districts fulfill their obligations to students with disabilities and their families.

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI) is one of 40 not-for-profit independent living centers (ILCs) in New York State. Access to Independence aims

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to be Cortland County's foremost disability resource. Access to Independence empowers people to lead independent lives in their community and strives to open doors to full participation and access for all. Access to Independence believes that all people with disabilities should have nothing more, nothing less than equal opportunity. All people have the right to control their own lives, make their own decisions and to participate fully in society. ATI serves primarily the 50,000 residents of Cortland County, and occasionally the residents in the surrounding counties of Tompkins, Cayuga, Tioga, and Onondaga. Approximately 1 out of every 5 persons in Cortland County has a disability.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chad W. Underwood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chad" being the most prominent.

Chad W. Underwood, MPA
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Representative Claudia Tenney
Senator Charles Schumer
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand