



July 25, 2018

Administrator Lance Robertson
Principal Deputy Mary Lazare
Administration for Community Living
330 C St SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Administrator Robertson and Principal Deputy Administrator Lazare:

The undersigned organizations write to express great concern about recent comments from leadership at the Administration on Community Living and the apology that followed. We are seeking clarification on the specific comments and confirmation of ACL's commitment to community living for all people with disabilities no matter their level of need.

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society. Since its creation, CCD has advocated for expanding access to long term services and supports (LTSS) and has played a crucial role in the creation of federal programs expanding access to home and community-based services (HCBS). Community living is one of the most important threads that holds the groups of CCD together.

It is our understanding that Deputy Administrator Lazare, in her professional capacity, recently spoke at two national conferences on July 11th (the annual conference of the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities and the Autism Society of America). Individuals participating at both of these conferences reported that, at various points in her remarks, Ms. Lazare stated that ACL is embracing choice "as a policy," that segregated settings can be a good option for some people with

disabilities, and that ACL supports revisiting certain federal regulations related to community integration. In an apology conveyed via Twitter later that day, Ms. Lazare stated that while ACL supports community integration, ACL “[recognizes] that *Olmstead* gives people the right to other choices.”

The apology was as concerning as the initial statements made. We are alarmed by the statements made and do not believe the statements reflect an accurate understanding of the *Olmstead* decision.

This month is the 28th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which is the law that provides the framework for community integration so to learn of these comments in the month we are celebrating this historic civil right is particularly disappointing.

We also believe these statements are inconsistent with the mission and long-standing policies of the Administration on Community Living.. As stated in the description of ACL’s purpose, mission, and strategic objectives on the ACL website:

“All Americans—including people with disabilities and older adults—should be able to live at home with the supports they need, participating in communities that value their contributions. To help meet these needs, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) created the Administration for Community Living (ACL) in 2012.”

As the leadership of ACL, you are the highest-ranking officials in the federal government charged solely with promoting and supporting community living for people with disabilities of all ages, as well as older adults. It is critical to us that ACL take a firm stand that community should be the default for people with disabilities, not institutions and other segregated settings. It is our understanding that ACL is already planning to meet with the CCD board, and we welcome this as a first step. However, we urge you also to draft and release a public statement affirming ACL’s accurate and clear commitment to the *Olmstead* decision and community living. We are also happy to be a resource moving forward concerning strategies for promoting community living for ALL people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Allies for Independence
American Association on Health and Disability
American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)

American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD)
American Federation for the Blind
American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)
American Therapeutic Recreation Association
The Arc of the United States
Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Center for Public Representation
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Lutheran Services of America-Disability Network
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)
National Disability Institute
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Health Law Program (NHeLP)
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Respectability
TASH
United Spinal Association