



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

Statement from Members of the CCD Board of Directors

Members of the CCD Board of Directors call out recent statements made by the CDC Director that fuel inaccurate and harmful misconceptions that the lives of people with disabilities are of lesser value. When explaining research, amongst the low percentage of vaccinations that led to severe disease or death, Director Walensky stated, “The overwhelming number of deaths, over 75%, occurred in people who had at least four comorbidities. So really, these are people who were unwell to begin with. And yes, really encouraging news in the context of omicron.”

Whether intentional or not, words matter. No death of a person with disabilities is “encouraging news.” The COVID-19 pandemic and related systematic failures have resulted in disproportionate deaths of people with disabilities and even more disproportionately, deaths of disabled Black, Indigenous, and People of Color—making this statement particularly callous and inappropriate.

While equal value and rights should never even be questioned, people with disabilities for too long have had to prove their worth and fight at every turn, in all aspects of society. CCD came into existence and remains vigilant today for this very reason. With statements like these, CDC loses the confidence of disabled people who should be able to rely on public health officials to treat their lives as equal in value to all others.

We are still in the middle of a major pandemic and there is a great deal of work to be done. CDC must address the impact of these comments, ensure that disabled people and those most impacted are front and center in identifying solutions and redouble its efforts to ameliorate the impact of the pandemic on people with disabilities. CCD looks forward to continuing to work with the CDC on these shared goals to effectively safeguard the health and lives of people with disabilities through the pandemic and beyond.

Sincerely,

Laura Weidner, CCD Chair, Epilepsy Foundation
Carol Tyson, CCD Vice-Chair, Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)
Tracey Gronniger, CCD Secretary, Justice in Aging
Claire Stanley, CCD Treasurer, National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)

Heather Ansley, Immediate Past Chair, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA)
Julia Bascom, At-large Board Member, Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (DREDF)
Dan Berland, At-large Board Member, National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS)
Bethany Lilly, At-large Board Member, The Arc of the United States