November 23, 2020

The Honorable Jim Justice, Governor

Capitol Building

1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East

Charleston, WV 25305

Bill J. Crouch, Cabinet Secretary, DHHR

One Davis Square, Suite 100

Charleston, WV 25301

Ayne Amjad, MD, MPH, Commissioner and State Health Officer

Bureau for Public Health

350 Capitol Street, Room 702

Charleston, WV 25301

Dear Governor Justice, Secretary Crouch, and Commissioner Amjad:

We, the undersigned, represent the major organizations in the state charged with advocating on behalf of people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (IDD) as well as other entities interested in their well-being. As such, we are writing to draw your attention to a recent statement on COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation and Safety released by the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry (AADMD) and to express our support of the statement and its application to West Virginia.

In general, it now appears possible that a vaccine will be available soon. When a vaccine becomes available in our state, we want to make certain the vulnerabilities and needs of people with developmental disabilities will not be overlooked when determining allocation. Just as the AADMD has done, we recommend the following:

1. IDD should be explicitly included in the list of high-risk diagnoses that are used to determine if an individual is included in phase 1b (2 high risk diagnoses required) or phase 2 (1 high risk diagnosis required).
2. Include additional pulmonary comorbidities in the list of high-risk diagnoses: chronic or recurrent respiratory diseases from any cause, restrictive lung disease, and interstitial lung disease.
3. Individuals who live in group homes, or other congregate residential settings should be considered at equivalent risk to older adults who live in congregate settings and thus be included in phase one of vaccine allocation.
4. All direct support professionals (DSPs) who work with people with IDD, including group home staff, should be considered essential health care workers and should be included in Phase 1a of vaccine allocation, not Phase 2.

Just as the AADMD does, we only advocate for this once a vaccine has been proven safe and effective.

We hope you will take the opportunity to read the enclosed statement carefully and encourage total transparency in our state as protocols for distribution are developed.

Sincerely,

Astrive Advocacy, Inc.

Center for Excellence in Disabilities at WVU

Disability Rights of WV

Down Syndrome Network of WV

Fair Shake Network

Linda Freihling, MD, Pediatrician, WVU Medicine

Global\*Access, LLC

Jackson County Developmental Center, Inc.

Conrae Lucas-Adkins, PsyD, Marshall University, Department of School Psychology

Jodi Lyndsay, MD, Pediatric Neurologist, Executive Director, WVU Neurodevelopmental Center

Open Doors, Inc.

WV Autism Training Center

WV Developmental Disabilities Council

WV Down Syndrome Society

WV Statewide Independent Living Council

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