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**Senate Human Services Committee
Subject Matter Hearing on Supportive Housing and People with I/DD
November 6, 2019**

For almost 70 years, The Arc of Illinois has organized people with disabilities, families and community organizations from across the state to advocate for positive policy change that results in people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) becoming full participants in communities in Illinois.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the importance of affordable, supportive housing and the need to expand access to it for people with I/DD. We thank the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Corporation for Supportive Housing for arranging the opportunity for a diverse group of self-advocates, family members, advocates, providers and government officials to spend two days in Missouri learning about how that state encourages affordable, supportive housing for people with disabilities and strategizing about what could be brought back to Illinois. It is so critical for Illinois to look outside itself to learn from other states regarding home and community-based services and supports.

Here are a couple of areas where we see opportunities in Illinois to expand our use of affordable supportive housing including:

- Improve coordination between state housing efforts and DHS who is providing services;
- Identify a possible state housing specialist(s) who can help place people around the state and work with developers;
- Develop a regional approach to ensure advocates, providers and others are connecting with local and regional developers, housing authorities and others who are already building housing to ensure some of it is available to people with I/DD;
- Review the efforts around housing on the mental health side and see if we can learn from how Illinois connects people with mental health disabilities to housing in order to expand the use of supportive housing for I/DD;
- Educate independent services coordination (ISC) agencies about the Statewide Referral Network and other opportunities to find affordable supportive housing for people. Have the Division review the number of people taking up these options.

In addition to integrating some of the successes from Missouri, The Arc of Illinois believe we need to make improvements to the current I/DD system in order to be able to pair services through the home and community-based adult services waiver with affordable, supportive housing. These improvements include:

- Consistent assessments and person-centered planning that includes discussion of models outside of the usual homebased and CILA options;
- Higher funding rates for ISCs so that caseloads are reduced from 70 to 45 in order that case managers can spend the proper amount of time on helping people find housing;

- Funding for services that reflect the true cost of the services as well as wages for front line staff including direct support professionals above minimum wage to end the staffing crisis and allow flexibility in staffing options;
- Transition of the funding model to reflect an individual's support needs so that people with more behavioral health or medical support needs receive more funding to help them live in the community;
- Improvement in the funding model and expansion of the use of intermittent CILA, which can be paired very well with affordable supportive housing;
- Increased use of assistive technology including remote supports to allow for flexibility and independence;

We believe that Illinois must diversify the services it provides to people with I/DD in order that they can live, work, play, and learn in the community. Affordable supportive housing is key to offering a more diverse set of options while encouraging the utmost independence and addressing Illinois' need to implement the federal HCBS settings rules. Illinois is one of only three states that does not have a transition plan approved in order to move to spending waiver dollars on home and community-based services and supports that allow for individualized choice, self-direction and independence. Affordable supportive housing can be used to leverage federal and state housing dollars to help transform the system of support for people with I/DD. The 19,000 people who are waiting for services now and into the future will want to know they have real options for community living.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Legislature, the state government and the Illinois Council along with advocates to make these options a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meg Cooch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Meg" and last name "Cooch" clearly distinguishable.

Meg Cooch
Executive Director
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Achieve with us.