

June 22, 2020 (signers as of July 1)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

NATIONAL CALL TO ACTION: to NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION

EMERGENCY RELOCATION OF CONGREGATE SETTING RESIDENTS; SAVE LIVES NOW!

Congregate settings are inherently unsafe, especially during a pandemic. The stark and horrifying reality of this is painfully evident now as the COVID-19 pandemic tears through these facilities. Many of the people in these facilities are black and brown and most are poor. All are at inordinate risk and are dying in disproportionate numbers.

This must stop. We can help. People with disabilities living in our communities, in their own homes, have a radically lower infection rate than people living in congregate settings. We know that home and community based services are a cost effective solution.

We, the undersigned, including people with disabilities, disability advocates, Independent Living Centers, disability organizations, and our allies - do hereby issue this Call to Action to IMMEDIATELY relocate people with disabilities confined in congregate facilities infected by COVID-19 infection.

We not only expect but **demand** that the full weight and force of Federal, State, and Local government is mobilized immediately, with the fierce urgency of now, to enforce disability civil rights laws and relocate people from congregate settings as life-saving and life-sustaining imperatives. The following steps must happen now:

- Relocate residents to safe, non-congregate, cohort settings that house no more than one person per room
- Identify residents who want to transition to Home & Community Based Services (HCBS)
- Require that institutions / long-term care facilities grant access to essential CIL staff and transition coordinators in order to implement these relocation plans
- Expedite HCBS eligibility determinations for those who want to remain in the community OR who refuse to return to an unsafe congregate setting
- Work with your Department of Commissioners, etc. to utilize alternative funds (such as FEMA Public Assistance Category B funds) to cover the costs of care, shelter and food during disaster relocations
- Immediately lift the restrictions on visitations. Data shows visits from family are critical to the well-being and quality of life of people housed in these congregate settings. Not allowing visitations is contributing to the increases in death

The undersigned call for a multi-pronged approach to preventing additional abuse and neglect in congregate settings due to pandemic policies and responses. The first prong is to divert people with disabilities from ever going to congregate facilities by ensuring that they have adequate support at home and in the community. The second is to support people in congregate facilities, with and without COVID-19, in transitioning back

to the community with adequate health care, infection control, daily living support, and opportunities for improved pandemic outcomes.

Many local [Centers for Independent Living](#) have the expertise to spearhead immediate transitions out of congregate settings. But this requires the full support, backing and reimbursement measures of agencies as laid out by, for example, [FEMA Public Assistance](#) Emergency Protective Measures, Category B (p. 57). The FEMA language states that funds cover: evacuate and shelter individuals to meet their life-saving and life sustaining needs; their rights to be served in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs; as well as all other mechanisms available to meet the emergency protection obligations of recipients and sub recipients of federal financial assistance.

We demand that CILs and / or other transition personnel have immediate access to congregate settings as part of the Strike Teams that have been created and implemented. It is imperative that we be able to identify, evaluate and coordinate plans for relocation to accessible hotels, dorms, and other structures suitable for safe supports and occupancy.

It is wholly unacceptable to continue the current position that proposes to make congregate settings “better.” This is NOT the answer. We must liberate our brothers and sisters and siblings from these congregate settings and into permanent, sustainable, integrated, accessible and affordable housing with the support and services they require to maintain their health, safety, independence and dignity. This is the only acceptable answer.

The organizations listed below have signed on in support and in solidarity of the Emergency Relocation of Congregate Setting Residents

Access Living, IL

ADAPT Delaware

ADAPT Indiana

Alliance for Community Services

Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living

Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living

Atlantis ADAPT, CO

Atlantis Community, Inc., CO

Center for Public Representation, DC

Chicago ADAPT

Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition

Davis Integrated Services, LLC
Democratic Disability Caucus of Florida
DIRECT Center for Independence, Inc. AZ
Everybody Counts Center for Independent Living, IN
Georgia ADAPT
Gulf Coast ADAPT
Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living
Jane Addams Senior Caucus
Kansas ADAPT
Lake County Center for Independent Living, IL
Liberty Resources
LIFE Center for Independent Living, IL
Mass ADAPT
Montana ADAPT
National ADAPT
National Council on Independent Living
North Central PA ADAPT
Northwestern Illinois Center for Independent Living
Olmstead Network
Pennsylvania Council on Independent Living
PA ADAPT
Progress Center for Independent Living, IL
REACH Resource Centers on Independent Living TX
Roads to Freedom CIL
Shriver Center on Poverty Law, IL
Southern Illinois Center for Independent Living
Southwest Center for Independence, CO
Statewide Independent Living Council of Illinois
Task Force for Attendant Services, IL
The Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy and Innovation, CA

The Going Home Coalition

The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies, PA

Washington ADAPT

World Institute on Disabilities, DC

Survivors of Institutions

John Fry

Justin Bell

Russell Allen

Jennie Brown

Mary Bolouski

Robert Andruscavage

Lillian Gastrock