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January 12, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader of the US Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

**Re: Congratulations on Majority Leader and Movement of DIA**

Dear Senator Charles Schumer,

On behalf of the New York Association on Independent Living and the members listed below, we want to congratulate you on becoming the US Senate Majority leader for the 117th Congress.

During the last year, the world has been fighting to survive the worse pandemic in modern history. The Coronavirus of 2019 (COVID19) is the leading killer of people with disabilities who are confined in long-term care facilities, specifically nursing home. According to the [Kaiser Family Foundation COVID has claimed the lives of 100,000 Long-term care Residents and staff as of November 24, 2020](#). (KFF – article Nov. 25, 2020) It has been reported that a majority of the lives lost were those of Black people; as it has been reported COVID is ravaging the lives of those in this community throughout this country.

From the article:

*This week marks a bleak milestone in the pandemic's effect on residents and staff in long-term care facilities across the country. According to our latest analysis of state-reported data, COVID-19 has claimed the lives of more than 100,000 long-term care facility residents and staff as of the last week in November. This finding comes at a time when public health experts are predicting a surge in cases after holiday gatherings and increased time indoors due to winter weather, which will have ripple effects on hospitals and nursing homes, given [the close relationship between community spread and cases in congregate care settings](#). As the nation braces for the fallout of the holiday, [recent data](#) on deaths in long-term care facilities highlight the ongoing disproportionate impact on this high-risk population.*

Since this article was written, almost 27,000 more people in nursing facilities have died. At the current rate, one nursing facility resident dies from COVID-19 every minute-and-a-half. Research from Connecticut compared the COVID-19 infection and deaths rates of individuals in nursing facilities to those in home and community-based waivers.

Nursing facility residents were 11 times more likely to become infected with COVID-19 than their community-based peers and, importantly, 11 times more likely to die from COVID-19. This demonstrated that institutionalization, itself, was the reason for the massive number of deaths and that over 90% of these deaths would have been prevented if these nursing facility residents had been living in the community. Based on today's numbers, that means over 115,000 elderly and Disabled people died needlessly from COVID-19.

With a transfer of power in Congress and your leadership, there is a historic opportunity to end these deaths by ensuring that people with disabilities are no longer forced into institutions.

You have been an amazing champion for disability issues and as the author and original sponsor of the Disability Integration Act (DIA) you now are positioned to get this critically-important bill passed in Congress. Many disabled people worked long and hard to create "this perfect storm" for establishing a policy that will save the lives of thousands who are institutionalized. After decades of hard work, we now have a majority in both the House and Senate and a President who will sign the legislation. We look forward to you swiftly moving DIA through the legislative process.

Passing DIA will dismantle the oppressive system that keep disabled people institutionalized and causing their deaths as this pandemic rages on. It is also integral to the work you have embraced to improve the lives of Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) through your commitment to racial justice.

We look forward to working with you and your staff to move the DIA through the legislative process and to the President's desk.

If you have any questions, please contact Dara Baldwin, Director of National Policy, Center for Disability Rights (CDR) at [dara.baldwin@ncdr.us](mailto:dara.baldwin@ncdr.us) or 202-919-5725 with any questions.

Thanks,

Access To Independence of Cortland County, Inc.  
AIM Independent Living Center  
ARISE  
Bronx Independent Living Services  
Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled  
Capital District Center for Independence, Inc.  
Catskill Center for Independence  
Center for Disability Rights  
Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY  
Finger Lakes Independence Center  
Independent Living, Inc.  
Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley

LIFE at RCIL

Long Island Center for Independent Living, Inc.  
Maximizing Independent Living Choices  
New York Association on Independent Living  
North Country Center for Independence  
Northern Regional Center for Independent Living  
Regional Center for Independent Living  
Resource Center for Accessible Living  
Rockland Independent Living Center, Inc. (dba BRIDGES)  
Suffolk Independent Living Organization  
Southern Adirondack Independent Living  
Southern Tier Independence Center, Inc.  
Southwestern Independent Living Center  
Staten Island Center for Independent Living  
Taconic Resources for Independence, Inc.  
Tri-Lakes Center for Independent Living  
Westchester Independent Living Center  
Western New York Independent Living, Inc.