



Iowa's Olmstead Consumer Task Force

December 18, 2020

The Honorable Kim Reynolds
Governor of Iowa
1007 E Grand Ave
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Dear Governor Reynolds:

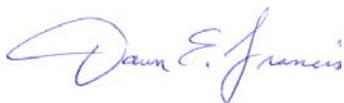
The Iowa Olmstead Consumer Task Force (OCTF) advocates for Iowans with disabilities and long-term care needs and promotes integrated community living, employment, and participation in community life for everyone. Both the Iowa Department for the Blind's funding request to continue its Young Adult Transition Program beyond its pilot year and its request to obtain an increase in appropriation to obtain an additional independent living teacher align with this mission.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made abundantly clear how crucial giving older individuals the skills and confidence they need to remain independent in their homes truly is. IDB currently has six teachers to serve all 99 counties. Two of these teachers have to cover more than 20 counties and one of these teachers has to cover more than a quarter of the state. Adding an additional teacher would reduce teacher territory sizes, reducing travel time and allowing clients to be seen sooner and more frequently. It would also allow for expanded outreach to doctor's offices, nursing homes, and community service providers to increase awareness of the availability and benefit of IDB services. IDB shares our commitment to making sure that everyone should be able to remain in their own homes to the greatest extent possible and having an additional teacher would allow a greater number of individuals to receive more timely and extensive services which will bring us closer to that goal.

The Young Adult Transition Program (YATP) at the Iowa Department for the Blind aligns with this mission by providing youth who are blind and have additional barriers the training they need to live as independently as possible and obtain competitive integrated employment. This program fills the gaps in independent living, self-care, and financial management skills these youth need to live in the community. Most programs serving transition age youth with disabilities do not know how to teach crucial adjustment to blindness skills such as braille, using phones and computers with speech and braille, alternative techniques for meal preparation and home management or independent mobility using a long white cane. Without these core skills, youth who are blind can't fully participate in these programs and cannot achieve independence as others in the program would. The YATP meets both the youths' individualized goals as listed on their IEP while learning core blindness skills and developing a positive attitude toward blindness and all disabilities. YATP students also develop self-advocacy and problem-solving skills that will allow them to speak for themselves regarding their living situation and employment conditions. This program gives youth the tools they need to avoid overly restrictive congregate living situations and sheltered employment so they may live as independently as possible and be as engaged in their communities as they choose to become.

We are very much in support of this endeavor to fill this long standing service gap and get youth with additional barriers the blindness skills they need to achieve their fullest potential. We ask the Governor and legislature to provide the appropriation necessary to continue this program beyond its pilot year as well as provide the appropriation necessary to put an additional independent living teacher in the field to help older Iowans who are losing vision to remain independent in their homes and communities.

Sincerely,



Dawn E. Francis

Iowa OCTF Chair

dawn@iowasilc.org

515-480-3027