**NEVADA GOVERNOR’S COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

**Position on Self-Advocacy for Individuals with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities**

For decades, individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) have faced systemic barriers to full participation in society, including limited access to education, employment, healthcare, and community living. Historically, decision-making about their lives was placed in the hands of caregivers, professionals, and institutions, often excluding individuals with I/DD from meaningful participation. The self-advocacy movement emerged in response to this, empowering individuals with I/DD to speak for themselves, make informed choices, and take leadership roles in advocating for their rights. Despite significant progress, many individuals with I/DD continue to experience challenges in exercising self-determination due to outdated policies, lack of accessible resources, and insufficient opportunities for leadership and civic engagement.

**The Nevada Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities (NGCDD) believes that self-advocacy is a fundamental right of all individuals with I/DD. Self-advocacy fosters independence, personal growth, and full participation in the community. NGCDD supports policies and programs that empower individuals with I/DD to:**

* **Have a voice in decisions affecting their lives.**
* **Access education and training on self-advocacy, leadership, and rights.**
* **Be included in policymaking at local, state, and national levels.**
* **Receive accommodations and supports that enhance their ability to advocate for themselves.**
* **Engage in meaningful employment and community-based living options that respect their autonomy and choices.**

NGCDD is committed to advancing policies that uphold the rights, dignity, and autonomy of individuals with I/DD. By fostering a culture of self-advocacy, we can build a more inclusive and equitable society where all individuals have the power to shape their own futures.

**Policy Recommendations:**
To strengthen self-advocacy for individuals with I/DD, NGCDD recommends the following policy actions:

1. **Increase Funding for Self-Advocacy Programs:** Support and expand funding for self-advocacy training, leadership development, and peer support networks.
2. **Ensure Meaningful Representation:** Require the inclusion of individuals with I/DD in advisory councils, boards, and decision-making bodies at all levels of government.
3. **Promote Accessible Information and Communication:** Develop and enforce policies ensuring that individuals with I/DD receive information in accessible formats, including plain language, braille, and assistive technology.
4. **Expand Education and Training:** Integrate self-advocacy and disability rights education into schools, transition programs, and vocational training to empower individuals from an early age.
5. **Protect and Strengthen Disability Rights Laws:** Advocate for the enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Olmstead decision, and other policies that support self-determination and independence.
6. **Improve Support for Decision-Making:** Expand access to supported decision-making as an alternative to guardianship, ensuring individuals retain control over their own choices while receiving the necessary support.
7. **Encourage Employment and Economic Independence:** Promote inclusive employment policies and eliminate barriers that prevent individuals with I/DD from working in competitive, integrated jobs.

Last Review Date: