

The Honorable Charlie Crist
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor Crist:

I am writing to you representing the Board of Directors of Parents Planning Programs for the Developmentally Disabled of Florida, Inc. -- a nonprofit organization providing recreational programs for over seventy members as well as provider services for individuals with developmental disabilities in Brevard County.

We request that you consider proactively fostering diversity within the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc. (FDDC) and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD). In so doing, you will foster further cost savings for the state budget.

Creating a working environment that encourages people to think creatively and innovatively must start at the top. Governor Crist, we need your help! In order to make positive changes to the system we must think and act differently.

The current homogeneity of philosophy, thought, and opinion within FDDC and APD has created an atmosphere which stifles innovative ideas, thinking "outside the box" and creative solutions for residential options for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Cost-effective solutions are at hand that engage and leverage local resources and give individuals with developmental disabilities greater freedom and inclusion in the community of their choice.

These solutions will challenge the current thinking of members of the FDDC and mid-level managers at the APD to broaden their definition of "community inclusion" to include and embrace residential communities similar to retirement communities. These "communities of choice" offer greater opportunities to socialize with peers, share life experiences, support one another, and live in "community" with both disabled and non-disabled neighbors. Just like the old neighborhoods we grew up in.

With the current budget shortfalls severely limiting services, and the threat of even greater shortfalls, the State of Florida simply cannot afford to overlook cost-effective innovations that families overwhelmingly want for their family members with developmental disabilities.

Please consider appointing newcomers to the FDDC who welcome the idea of planned residential communities specifically designed to meet the day-to-day needs of people with disabilities. If this lifestyle is what they choose, this option must be available to them. Not only would this type of community improve the quality of life for an individual with a developmental disability, it would also save the state money by

reducing the ongoing costs of providing services under the Medicaid Home and Community Based Waiver Program.

If you have any questions or would like greater clarity in our thoughts, please feel free to contact me directly at the phone number shown below.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Parents Planning Programs (PPP) for the Developmentally Disabled of Florida, inc.