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November 14, 2019

Elizabeth Linderbaum
Association for Community Affiliated Plans
1155 15th Street, NW Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Linderbaum,

It is with great pleasure that I nominate Dave Curro for ACAP's Leadership in Advocacy Award. Dave is a retired Army veteran and the father of a young man in our Medicaid catchment area with an intellectual/developmental disability who is living his best and most independent life. Among his accomplishments are a lifetime of support and ardent advocacy of his son, facilitation of two local Next Step support groups, and service on the Alliance Health Board of Directors and as chair of the Alliance Health Consumer and Family Advisory Committee. I will do my best to do justice to the invaluable advocacy role he has played in each of those four areas.

First and foremost is Dave's support of his son Bret. North Carolina operates an "Innovations" waiver that provides an array of services for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Unfortunately, there are far too few waiver slots available, resulting in a large and slow-moving wait list, called the Registry of Unmet Needs. Because Bret is on that wait list he has limited access to paid supports in our community. Undeterred by this, Dave has done yeoman's work for years to provide Bret with the help and support that has empowered him to secure and maintain a job and live independently in his own apartment. Bret is fascinated with German culture, has taught himself the German language, and this year Dave traveled with Bret to Germany to experience that country and its culture firsthand. Without the constant support and advocacy that Dave offers Bret he certainly would have struggled to make the progress he has made and would very likely not be living the satisfying and rewarding life he is now. While not systemic advocacy, this is where the hard work begins and ends for our members and their families and Dave is the best kind of advocate his son could hope for.

In learning to navigate the world of limited supports, years ago Dave discovered Next Step (iddnextstep.org), a support group with a mission to gather a community of people dedicated to helping each other prepare their adult children with an intellectual/developmental disability to live the highest functioning, most independent life of their choosing. He began participating to help gain greater access for the help Bret needed, but as is his propensity, he soon accepted a leadership position as facilitator of the group. In that role he has the important and time-consuming responsibility to identify and arrange for speakers to share essential information with group members and their families about available services, natural or free supports in the community, and areas in which they can advocate with local and state leaders.

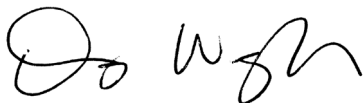


Unfortunately, advocacy at the individual level is learned and undertaken out of necessity for most people, and understanding how to advocate effectively at the state and local level is not in the natural skill set for many. Dave has mentored many group members, helping them understand often nuanced and complex issues – political and otherwise – allowing them to advocate in an informed and strategic manner. The expertise he has developed over years of his own advocacy has helped make the group integral in convincing state legislators to consider a significant number of additional slots for the Innovations waiver. While Dave began his work with this group in Wake County, he moved to Durham County and started another group there while continuing to facilitate the Wake County group. His energy sometimes seems endless and his passion for supporting members and families and helping them to stand up and be counted is beyond admirable.

State law mandates that all North Carolina LME/MCOs support Consumer and Family Advisory Committees, self-governing workgroups comprised of people with lived experience and their family members who serve as advisors to the LME/MCO administration and boards of directors. Dave has served on the Alliance CFAC for years, including tenure as the group's chair, where he has empowered members and their families to speak up and participate in legislative events, to write letters to representatives, and to effectively communicate their needs from a system designed to support them. Last year Dave led colleagues in attending a statewide advocacy day, visiting with legislators to share their stories and their needs. North Carolina offers significant challenges to people with disabilities in need of help. We are a state in the middle of Medicaid transformation to managed care, a state without – but in great need of – Medicaid expansion, and a state with limited resources devoted to our uninsured populations. Dave has been an effective leader in influencing members to write letters sharing personal experiences and encouraging legislators to expand Medicaid, to cease and restore cuts to uninsured populations, and to increase slots for the Innovations waiver.

Dave also sits on the Alliance Board of Directors as a family member of someone with an intellectual/developmental disability. His ability to ground board members and sharpen their focus on exactly who Alliance serves is invaluable. He is quick to solicit their support of his advocacy efforts and encourages them to become passionate advocates as well. As a person in recovery myself, and a family member of those receiving services, I am tremendously comforted knowing that Dave is at the table where strategic decisions are made on a regular basis. “Nothing about us without us” is a mantra Dave consistently carries well. Again, it is with great honor that I submit Dave Curro to you for consideration for your Leadership in Advocacy Award. He is richly deserving of it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Doug" being more prominent than the last name "Wright".

Doug Wright
Director of Community and Member Engagement
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cc: Rob Robinson, Alliance Health CEO