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GOVERNMENT OF GUAHAN

GUAM DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

Konsehelon Guåhan para i Taotao ni' Maninutet desde ki Manhoben

130 University Drive Suite 17, Mangilao, Guam 96913

Guam Developmental Disabilities Council

EDDIE B. CALVO
Governor

RAYMOND TENORIO
Lieutenant Governor

Speaker Benjamin J.F. Cruz

ROSANNE S. ADA
Executive Director

JOSEPHINE GUERRERO
Chairperson

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August 25, 2017

The Honorable Speaker Benjamin Cruz
Suite 107 Hessler Place
Hagatna, Guam 96910

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT RECEIPT
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Date: 9/12/17

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Dear Speaker Cruz:

I am writing to express my serious concern with the significant cuts as proposed in the White House's Fiscal Year 2018 budget titled *A New Foundation For American Greatness* and the impact the cuts will have on persons with developmental disabilities. Specifically, as the Executive Director of the Guam Developmental Disabilities Council (GDDC), I am writing in regards to the proposal to cut and restructure the State Councils on Developmental Disabilities (DD Councils). The DD Councils, through their innovative programming ensure persons with developmental disabilities can realize the same goals we all have, to live in their communities, and be taxpayers.

The State Councils on DD were first authorized in 1970. They are currently part of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (The DD Act). *My organization is an organization funded under the DD Act or frequently partners with and collaborates with the DD Councils.* The DD Councils, in partnership with the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs) and Protection and Advocacy program for Developmental Disabilities (P&As) known as the DD Network have provided critical services and supports for those with DD.

The DD Network on Guam known as the Tri-Agency partners consist of the Guam Developmental Disabilities Council (GDDC), University of Guam (UOG) Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (CEDDERS), and Guam Legal Services Corporation-Disability Law Center (GLSC-DLC). The Tri-Agency works collaboratively by sponsoring and or conducting various conferences, workshops, trainings, outreach and awareness activities in the community to inform and provide information to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families on available resources in the community. The activities help individuals with developmental disabilities to obtain needed services in areas of education, employment, housing, health, childcare, community supports (formal/informal), quality assurance, self-advocacy, recreation, transportation, including assistive technology. The areas of emphasis help promote independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion in all facets of community life. Therefore, individuals with developmental disabilities are able to access educational supports, obtain a job, receive health services, obtain a home and access to assistive technology devices to help make their lives easier.

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The central purpose of the DD Act is to "assure that persons with developmental disabilities and their families participate in the design of and have access to needed community services, individualized supports...that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in all facets of community life." The DD Act has always been a bi-partisan piece of legislation.

For over 47 years, the concept of the triumvirate in the DD Act was designed by and for individuals with developmental disabilities and was masterful in its partnering together of three distinctly different programs that together work collaboratively to meet the overall intended purpose of the DD Act through their individual responsibilities. The DD Councils, P&As, and UCEDDs are linked in their responsibilities ensuring a well-trained cadre of experts providing services to individuals with disabilities and their families, protecting people's rights, and ensuring that people with developmental disabilities are fully included in the work to improve state services and systems to ensure they are inclusive of everyone.

Sixty percent of the membership of the DD Council is mandated to be individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. The DD Councils are unique in that people with developmental disabilities who are encountering barriers and challenges are the majority of the people creating the state's plan for how it can address those challenges through creating and funding innovative programs. The DD Councils just began their first year of a new five-year state plan that lays out the goals, objectives, and activities of the DD Council, and what each DD Council will accomplish in the next five years with its funding.

The President's FY 2018 budget would remove the voices of persons with developmental from the DD Act. Losing the input of persons with developmental disabilities about how to create and improve better services and systems to support them will dilute the entire essence of the DD Act. Furthermore, pairing the DD Councils with two other entities that represent different parts of the disability community, are not national in scope, have different authorizing statutes and mandates, will result in a significant loss of focus on those living with developmental disabilities. Under this structure, DD Councils will not be able to meet the stated goals of the DD Act that have been efficient and effective for close to 50 years.

Sincerely,

Rosanne S. Ada
Executive Director

Josephine E. Guerrero
Chairperson