



October 2, 2006

Everyday, Illinois residents face many challenges impacting their quality of life. These challenges often involve their health care, housing and education, as well as their economic independence through gainful employment and human rights. But for some these challenges are more profound and difficult to overcome.

Imagine 24,000 young adults with disabilities exiting the school system only to find too few transitional services to help integrate them into their communities. Or envision thousands of persons with psychiatric disorders being discharged from institutions, only to find too few mental health supports to assist with their recovery. Further imagine a housing crisis where approximately 3,200 persons with disabilities cannot access supportive housing services. For persons with disabilities these situations are a reality not their imagination.

You do not have to travel very far to meet these persons with special needs, because they are all residents of our state. They are our family members, our friends and neighbors, and all too often the stranger we pass on the street that has lost hope. It should come as no surprise that the State of Illinois has an unemployment rate approaching 70 percent among persons with disabilities, or that there are 1,863 people over 60 caring for a family member with a developmental disability.

There are 2.2 million voters statewide in Illinois that are touched by and care about disability issues. They seek all the gubernatorial candidates' immediate attention to these challenges. At stake are not just people's votes or politics, but rather the quality of daily life for persons with disabilities and their families.

Included with this letter is some useful information about our "***ONE ILLINOIS: A Community Initiative for Persons with Disabilities.***" We strongly encourage you to draw attention to these issues, and others, facing Illinois residents with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Janet Stover  
Executive Director