



“ONE ILLINOIS” SHOULD INCLUDE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS; Campaign Calls on Gubernatorial Candidates to Support Special Education

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Springfield, Illinois (October 3, 2006) – The Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (IARF) today called on all candidates for governor to improve educational opportunities for all students, including students with disabilities. Studies show that students with disabilities remain twice as likely to drop out of high school (21 percent versus 10 percent)¹.

“Education should not be a partisan issue, but rather about creating ‘*ONE ILLINOIS*’ for the future of our great state,” argued Janet Stover, Executive Director of the Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, referencing IARF’s statewide campaign. “Students with disabilities deserve and should have access to the same quality education as their non-disabled counterparts. We call on all candidates for Governor to make special education in the Illinois school system a priority over the next four years.”

According to the “*ONE ILLINOIS: A Community Initiative for Persons with Disabilities*” campaign, there were 16,180 children enrolled in the Early Intervention system from June 2005 to May 2006, and an estimated 24,000 students per year that exit the special education system and may require interagency transition services and/or long term services and supports in the community.

The IARF campaign comes as the federal government recently released new regulations governing the nation’s special education programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

“Thirty years ago, America’s students with disabilities were for the first time assured access to a free and appropriate public education thanks to a new law passed by Congress, now called IDEA,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings last month upon releasing new regulations governing the nation’s special education. “Yet in those 30 years, too many students with disabilities have faced what President Bush calls ‘the soft bigotry of low expectations.’ Students with disabilities can meet high standards, as long as we adults have high expectations and hold them to these standards.”²

IARF and its members, other community providers, our One Illinois partners, along with agency boards of directors, staff, persons with disabilities and mental illness, family members, and local communities are 2.2 million voters that seek all gubernatorial candidates’ immediate attention to the platform issues. At stake are not just people’s votes or politics, but rather the quality daily life for persons with disabilities and mental illness.

To learn more about “*ONE ILLINOIS: A Community Initiative for Persons with Disabilities*,” please visit www.oneillinois.info, or contact Janet Stover by phone at (217) 753-1190 or email at jstover@hso.net.

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¹ 2004 N.O.D./Harris Survey of Americans with Disabilities. National Organization on Disability, June 25, 2004.

² Secretary Spellings Announces New Special Education Regulations, U.S. Department of Education Press Office, August 3, 2006.