

## **Sample Letter-to-Editor #1 – FAMILY**

Dear Editor,

My son is proud to contribute to his community. He works doing (insert job type) in (insert city name) through an opportunity afforded to him by (insert agency name). While I am sure many of my fellow residents take pride in their jobs, working for (insert agency name) has meant the world to my son. My son considers himself lucky, because job opportunities for young adults with disabilities are not readily available.

I applaud and support the “ONE ILLINOIS: A Community Initiative for Persons with Disabilities” campaign. The campaign is trying to better educate Rod Blagojevich and Judy Maar-Topinka about the challenges all too often facing my son, and other residents of Illinois with disabilities. We need more community-based opportunities. So this election, I will be voting for the candidate that allows my son the chance to live more independently in his community by earning wages and paying taxes. This is not a partisan issue rather it is an Illinois issue!

I share my family’s experience with you because it has helped to teach my son the value of hard work, responsibility and having a positive impact on his life. I hope that both candidates for Governor, as well as the Illinois Legislature do more to support the ONE ILLINOIS platform, because after all they will be supporting my son.

Jane Doe, Springfield, Illinois

## **Sample Letter-to-Editor #2 – FAMILY**

Dear Editor,

My child is preparing to graduate from high school, but unlike many other children (insert his/her) age the diploma is not nearly enough. (insert name) would benefit from transitional services designed to ease the move from special education to employment in the community.

Transition services are defined as a coordinated set of activities that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, based on the individual student’s needs, preferences and interests. (Insert name) is not alone. An estimated 24,000 students per year exit the special education system and may require interagency transition services and/or long term services and supports in the community. All too often these services and supports do not exist or are under-funded by the State.

I urge both candidates for governor to think of (insert name) during this election, and learn more about the “ONE ILLINOIS” campaign. It is a community initiative for persons with disabilities and calls on Illinois to better prepare its students with disabilities for the “real” world.

Jane Doe, Peoria, Illinois

## **Sample Letter-to-Editor #1 – CONSUMER**

Dear Editor,

I have been employed at (insert agency name) for the last (insert #) years by virtue of services that offer jobs to people with disabilities like me. For this reason, I am supporting the “ONE ILLINOIS: A Community Initiative for Persons with Disabilities” platform this election. The platform aims to provide meaningful opportunities in our communities, such as ones offered by (insert agency name).

I for one have benefited greatly from this opportunity. While it costs the Illinois taxpayers little, it provides me with so much for which to be thankful. I earn a good wage and help to contribute to my community here in (insert city name). So this election, I will support the candidate for governor who supports ONE ILLINOIS.

John Doe, Springfield, Illinois

## **Sample Letter-to-Editor #2 – CONSUMER**

My name is (insert name) and I have a disability. I am one of the lucky ones, because I have been employed at (insert employment) for the last (insert length of employment). Why lucky? According to most government sources the unemployment rate among Americans with disabilities exceeds 70 percent.

The time has come for ONE ILLINOIS: A Community Initiative for Persons with Disabilities. I learned of this campaign and urge both candidates for governor to do the same. ONE ILLINOIS is about fairness. ONE ILLINOIS is about opportunity. ONE ILLINOIS is about doing the right thing for all citizens of our great state.

With earning a paycheck, and yes even paying taxes, comes dignity and self-respect. I hope Mr. Blagojevich and Judy Maar-Topinka are listening to me, because I am listening to what they each have to say about ONE ILLINOIS.

John Doe, Macomb, Illinois

## **Sample Letter-to-Editor #1 – IARF MEMBER AGENCY**

Dear Editor,

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 developmental disabilities cannot access supportive housing services.

Where could this be happening, you ask? Would it surprise you if you learned it was happening right here in Illinois. Unfortunately, it is.

(insert agency name) is working to improve these conditions for residents with disabilities living in (insert city name). But we need help. That is why (insert agency name) is supporting the “ONE ILLINOIS: A Community Initiative for Persons with Disabilities” campaign. The platform aims to provide meaningful opportunities in our communities, such as ones offered to the (insert #) individuals by our agency.

The “ONE ILLINOIS” campaign is about our family members, our friends and our neighbors. But it is also about the stranger we pass on the street that has lost hope. I hope that you will join me in supporting this important statewide campaign.

## **Sample Letter-to-Editor #2 – IARF MEMBER AGENCY**

Dear Editor,

In Illinois, there are 1,863 people over 60 caring for a family member with a developmental disability. That is certainly no easy task, and these individuals are often our family, our friends, and our neighbors. Wouldn't you agree that they need our help?

(insert agency name) is working to improve these conditions for residents with disabilities, and their families living in (insert city name). But we cannot do it alone.

That is why I am supporting “ONE ILLINOIS: A Community Initiative for Persons with Disabilities.” This campaign is trying to better educate Rod Blagojevich and Judy Maar-Topinka about the challenges all too often facing residents of our state with a developmental disability, psychiatric disability, physical disability or mental illness. Our state should be doing more to invest in community-based programs designed to promote independent living, as well as support for the 1,863 family caregivers over age 60. Many of our state's residents with disabilities are prematurely being put into nursing homes, despite the desire to remain at home or in their communities.

(insert agency name) is working to improve these conditions for residents with disabilities living in (insert city name). But we need help.

John Doe

### **Sample Letter-to-Editor #3 – IARF MEMBER AGENCY**

Dear Editor,

(insert agency name) has been working for over (insert #) years to provide housing for (insert city name)'s residents with disabilities. Despite our good work, and heart-warming accomplishments, (insert agency name) is not going to be satisfied until everyone resident with a disability is afforded the opportunity to live in his or her community. That is why we are supporting the "ONE ILLINOIS: A Community Initiative for Persons with Disabilities" campaign.

An estimated 3,200 persons with a developmental disability have urgent needs for residential services/supports as reflected in the June 26, 2006 Prioritization of Urgency Needs for Services (PUNS) data. A huge gap between supply and demand of supportive housing for persons with mental illness exists in Illinois. It is estimated that 10,400 units of permanent supportive housing are needed, nearly double the 5,466 units that exist today. The lack of affordable/accessible housing throughout the state is a major crisis preventing many individuals with disabilities from living in their own homes with supports.

Before you cast your vote for governor, I urge you to learn more about ONE ILLINOIS and support the candidate that will best help those most in need. After all, by supporting ONE ILLINOIS you will be helping our family members, our friends and neighbors, and all too often the stranger we pass on the street that has lost hope.

John Doe