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June 5, 2020

Dear Friends of LARC,

The last three months have been challenging, to say the least, as a result of the pandemic. However, we continue to be blessed that none of our clients or employees have been diagnosed with COVID-19, nor do we currently have anyone with virus-like symptoms.

We remain grateful to all our amazing staff. It takes a very special person to choose a career that revolves around caring for the needs of others, and we extend our unending appreciation for the commitment, dedication, flexibility, and patience of our team during these unprecedented times. Due to the closure of Community Day Services, most of our staff are covering shifts in our 24-hour CILA program. The remainder of our staff is managing our programs' needs at our Lansing Campus, where we are in the process of deep cleaning all program areas and common areas and adding a fresh coat of paint throughout the building.

We are doing our best to keep those clients we serve in our 24-hour CILA program occupied and engaged in meaningful, enjoyable activities. We recently distributed tablets to all our homes, and our clients have been communicating with each other and their families via Zoom and Skype. We appreciate all the essential donations we've received in-kind from many families. For those of you who wish to help, we are still in need of bleach, disinfecting wipes and sprays, spray bottles, face masks, hand sanitizer, paper towels, toilet paper, and temporal thermometers.

For those clients sheltering at home with their families, we miss you! Our staff recently coordinated a parade featuring nine decorated agency vans and all our CILA clients. They visited the homes of many of our community clients and families residing in Lansing, Calumet City, Thornton, and Lynwood. It was nice to see many clients and families waving from their front yards and holding homemade signs of encouragement and well wishes. We especially want to thank the Lansing Police Department for providing us with a tour along the parade route.

By now many of you have seen Governor Pritzker's "Restore Illinois" plan, and have heard that Illinois' COVID-19 numbers are beginning to flatten. As we enter Phase 3 of the Governor's plan, our Community Day Services remain subject to reopen at the direction of the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities.

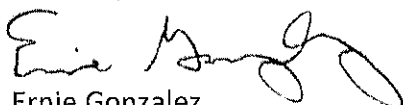
I continue to network with numerous providers, the Arc of Illinois, the Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, the Arc of the United States, the Institute on Public Policy for People with Disabilities, and other advocates throughout Illinois to discuss and begin to define the "new normal" once Community Day Services resume. We are planning on making adjustments to our programs to provide increased safety to our clients and staff, pending approval from the Department of Human Services. An important component of the planning process is receiving feedback from clients and families. We have already begun the process of seeking their input, and we will continue to provide families with updates as often as we can.

As many of you heard, we recently decided to cancel this year's Appreciation Dinner event after remaining hopeful that it could be rescheduled. We have reached out to all our donors and patrons to refund their money. We're grateful that many have elected to designate their event payments and sponsorships as a donation to LARC. We're also pleased to report that our Golf Outing is soon to be in "full swing!" Pending any changes made to Indiana Governor Holcomb's "Back on Track" plan, our Annual Golf Outing will be held on Friday, August 14, at Youche Country Club in Crown Point, Indiana. Registration begins at 11 AM, shotgun start is at 12:30 PM, and an awards dinner is at 5 PM. More information is forthcoming.

I want to close on a subject that has been weighing heavily on my mind. The tragic events in Minnesota, which served as a touchstone for the protests and riots throughout our nation, keep us all on high alert, but they also keep us in deep reflection. As an agency serving people with disabilities, we understand the importance of advocating against injustices and inequalities. Our collective and collaborative efforts helped us to achieve equal opportunities and the elimination of barriers to community integration for people with disabilities. We at LARC stand in solidarity with all those seeking justice and equality.

Please know that each of you continues to be in my prayers nightly and that I look forward to meeting with you in person again as soon as it is safe to do so. Please stay healthy and in good spirits until then.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ernie Gonzalez", written in a cursive style.

Ernie Gonzalez
Executive Director