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Columbia, MD 21046

November 20, 2021

To the Awards Committee for the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame,

On behalf of The Arc Maryland, I am so very pleased to support the nomination of Ms. Beatrice (Bea) Rodgers for the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame. The Arc Maryland is a statewide non-profit organization, established in 1960 by parents who were determined to create a better life for their children and others with developmental disabilities. Today, we have over 20,000 members statewide and our network of disability providers directly serves and supports more than 5000 individuals with disabilities to live, learn, work, and play in Maryland communities.

Every year, The Women's Hall of Fame honors women whose lives and work are of historic significance to Maryland's economic, political, cultural, and social existence. I can think of no one more deserving of this recognition; for her countless, and historic contributions to human rights, disability advocacy, and the elevation of the needs of people with disabilities and their families to all levels of government, paving the way for community services for people with disabilities that we have in Maryland today.

Bea Rodgers has supported thousands of people with disabilities and their families throughout her local community and the state. She has devoted over 5 decades of work, volunteerism, and service to those in need.

Some highlights include, but are not limited to the following:

In the early 90s, Bea was the Director of Disability Services in Prince George's County where she served the needs of citizens of the county impeccably. In Spring 1994, it became known that the U.S. Department of Education would make funding available to Maryland to form a Center for Independent Living (CIL) and Montgomery and Prince George's Counties were selected as priority areas for the new CIL in the Statewide Independent Living Plan.

Bea partnered with her counterpart in Montgomery County, and together they convened a joint planning meeting with representatives of the two County Commissions to develop a plan for the development of the CIL. Fast forward to today, the CIL stands as one of the largest in the state and serves as a model for Independent Living Centers in other states that advocate for independence and equity for all people with disabilities.

When Bea left County Government, she went on to serve two terms as the Director of the Maryland Governor's Office on Disabilities. In 1997, and for several years

thereafter, her advocacy and work were instrumental in the movement to “unlock” the Developmental Disability Services Waiting list in Maryland. She helped broker a plan with the Director of the Developmental Disabilities Administration and Governor Paris Glendenning to garner a historic funding allocation to the Developmental Disabilities Administration budget. This funding was used to serve thousands of Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities who had previously languished on a long waiting list for needed community supports and services. The “unlock the waiting list” campaign spanned several years and under the initiative, thousands of people with disabilities and their families were finally able to access the supports and services they needed in the community.

After leaving state government, Bea became the first Executive Director of Resource Connections: a service coordination organization with a renewed focus on assisting people with IDD to lead and live their best lives. As has become tradition with anything Bea touches, the organization became a statewide model for other coordination organizations to follow: embracing and living into a fully person and family-centered approach to care coordination.

During this time, she was also instrumental in the advocacy to close Rosewood Center: an institution housing people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. On Friday, May 22, 2009, the last resident of Rosewood left the institution for the very last time, moving into a home in the community of his choice.

Once Resource Connections was soundly established, Bea looked toward retirement, however those plans were short-lived. Seeing more work to be done, she teamed up with The Arc Prince George’s County to become a Public Policy Coordinator for the organization. In that role, she facilitated membership participation in governmental affairs activities at the local, state, and federal levels for The Arc.

Bea also became an advocate and ambassador for By Their Side; a Maryland non-profit advocacy organization that partners with individuals and their parents, siblings, and/or Trustees to assure individual health and safety needs, rights, preferences and dreams, and life enrichment opportunities are addressed.

After several more years, Bea again “retired” and once again re-emerged from retirement in the advocacy scene to revitalize the struggling Prince George’s Provider Council (PGPC). The goal with her involvement was to elevate the organization to become a leading force of advocacy in the county. Today, the PGPC includes dozens of Developmental Disabilities Provider Organizations throughout the County who work together to share resources and promote initiatives in Prince George’s County to enhance developmental disability services and supports to people in need.

Throughout her distinguished career and life, Bea has been a beacon of hope and support for so many people. Her unselfish, untiring, and unwavering commitment to her work and volunteerism has resulted in several advances including increased

community funding for services, protections and advancements of disability rights, reduction of barriers to care, and increased measures for government accountability.

In her service specifically to The Arc Maryland, Bea served for a number of years on the Nominating Committee and was Chair of the Search Committee for the organization's Executive Director in 2016-2017. She served as a chair and member of the Governmental Affairs Committee, a Member of the Board of Directors for two terms, and most recently served as the Secretary of the organization.

Bea has been recognized for her work through many awards over the years to include advocacy awards from local Chapters of The Arc, and awards from other organizations supporting individuals with Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health conditions.

In the Spring of 2021, Bea received The Arc Maryland President's Cup: The Arc's highest honor, conveying official acknowledgement and appreciation to an individual who has made significant and historic contributions to the community and on behalf of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Bea is and has always been an innovative, forward-thinking woman with a pulse on the present and an eye to the future. She has created new programs and expanded existing ones to better the lives of historically marginalized Marylanders. She lives and breathes the values of respect, self-determination, equity, diversity, inclusion, and community through her extensive advocacy on the individual, local, and state levels, and she has blazed trails for generations to come.

For all that she is, has done, and will continue to do as long as she has breath in her lungs and blood in her veins, I enthusiastically urge the committee's favorable decision on the nomination of Beatrice Rodgers for the Women's Hall of Fame.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ande Kolp', with a stylized, flowing script.

Ande Kolp
Executive Director
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www.thearcmd.org