

## **A Note from OPWDD Commissioner Courtney Burke**

April 13, 2011

Dear Families and Colleagues:

As I write to you today, I am spending my second full day as Commissioner – I was confirmed by the New York State Senate on Monday. As one of my first “official” pieces of business, I wanted to communicate to you my vision for the people we support and serve.

As part of the confirmation process, I met with a number of our elected officials Monday to discuss our system of care. I told them that OPWDD has come a long way towards supporting people and families over the last 30-plus years, but I believe that our work is never complete. We must always strive to continuously improve, to do, and be – better.

I know that the troubling media stories over the past few weeks, which have brought up issues about quality of care and safety in the system, have many of you disheartened. I choose to look at this as an opportunity to put in place various reforms that will further strengthen OPWDD’s oversight, accountability and protection for the people we are so privileged to support day in and day out.

I also know I can’t do this alone. OPWDD was created by families and advocates and we must join with providers and their staffs to make New York State the national model of care for people with developmental disabilities.

I ask not only for your support in these endeavors, but for you to remain steadfast in your commitment to those we support and serve. I, in turn, will listen to and communicate with you as frequently and as openly as I can. I have created an email address, [people.first@opwdd.ny.gov](mailto:people.first@opwdd.ny.gov) that I invite you to access and to send me your concerns and your ideas on how we can work together to strengthen our system of care.

We cannot become complacent in our thinking and we must embrace change as the way to move our system forward. We must strive for the highest quality of care possible. We will not accept mediocrity.

Helen Keller once said, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” I am looking forward to working together with you to help people with developmental disabilities live richer lives.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Burke