



Paul Blaustein, Chair Person

PRESS RELEASE

DATE: 05/31/2018

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NJ COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES NAMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TRENTON N.J. – The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD) today announced Mercedes Witowsky as its new executive director. Witowsky will lead the daily work of the NJCDD in its mission to advocate for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities in New Jersey.

“Mercedes has devoted her professional career, in positions of increasing responsibility, to serving individuals with developmental disabilities and their families,” said NJCDD Chair Paul Blaustein. “She has served as a leader in advocating for the rights of individuals with disabilities to make informed choices, control their own lives and direct the necessary services they receive. Mercedes has earned the trust and respect of self-advocates and families, service providers, leaders of government agencies and legislators, through her commitment to serving the most vulnerable residents of our State. I am confident that Mercedes is the perfect choice to be the Council's Executive Director. I look forward to working with her to advance the Council's agenda of collaborating with all stakeholders, to improve the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.”

In addition to Witowsky's nearly four-decade private sector career supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), she has championed multiple family advocacy efforts across the state. For the past four years, Witowsky has dramatically increased the knowledge base of families throughout the State, as Chair of the Family Support Planning Council. Witowsky has been a driving force in establishing a Family Advisory Council to the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), providing valuable input to DDD as the system transitions to Fee for Service. Witowsky led the creation of the NJ Developmental Disabilities Advocacy Network (DDAN), bringing together stakeholders to establish and implement a collective advocacy agenda. All of Witowsky's advocacy efforts have focused on strengthening the voices of self-advocates and families to communicate their needs to service providers and government agencies.

On the national level, Witowsky served for 15 years as the NJ representative to the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), a leading non-profit trade organization representing more than 1,400 private community providers of services to individuals with disabilities across the country. Witowsky earned her teaching degree in Special Education from Kean University. She is also the proud parent of Anthony and Tina, a young lady with multiple disabilities.

“I am honored to be chosen to serve as the Council's Executive Director and eager to begin the next chapter of my lifelong commitment to empower individuals with I/DD and their families while working with State program administrators, providers and other stakeholders in always striving to provide information and improve access to supports and services,” said Witowsky.

Established in 1971, the NJCDD is funded by the federal government and the state of New Jersey. The Council is authorized by the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, and in New Jersey State government by NJSA 30:1AA 1.2 and is codified in Title 10 of the State Administrative Codes. State law places the Council "in but not of" the New Jersey Department of Human Services.

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