To:

Richard Whitley

Director of Health and Human Services, Nevada

400 West King Street, Suite 300

Carson City, Nevada 89703

Dear Mr. Whitley,

Recently, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) distributed funding related to the pandemic in the form of Public Health Workforce dollars. This funding was distributed to several funding agencies with the strong suggestion to work together when planning the use of these funds. One portion, in the amount of $80,000 was to be granted to the Designated State Entity (DSE) for Title VII, Part B, which is solely the Statewide Independent Living Council’s funding. Although, ACL specifically suggested the DSE consult with the Independent Living Network before utilizing this funding, the Planning, Advocacy and Community Services (PAC) Unit of Aging and Disability Services (our DSE) informed us that they decided to utilize the funding to hire new regional representatives without consulting with us first.

The Nevada Statewide Independent Living Council (NVSILC) has a State Plan for Independent Living in place that the DSE signs and agrees to. This State Plan specifically designates any new Part B funding received to go to the current NVSILC subawardee. Our current subawardee, the Rural Center for Independent Living, wrote up a proposal and submitted it to us that would address healthcare needs for people with disabilities across the State. As you are likely aware, the need for education and assistance for healthcare professionals that work with the disabled population is great. Unfortunately, when the Council brought this proposal forward to start discussions with the DSE, they chose not to sign the assurances and refused to accept the funding rather than work with us to decide how this funding could be best utilized.

This was extremely irresponsible and disrespectful to the disability community and the Council. We are appalled that our DSE would disregard us in such a blatant and cruel way. There are disabled people dying in their homes from COVID-19 because of the lack of medical care they are able to obtain in their Nevada communities and our DSE is refusing federal funding to address it because they wanted to use it for their own purpose. They did not even allow a debate or discussion before making that choice.

In the years that NVSILC has been utilizing Aging and Disability Services Division to be our DSE, the Council has been growing stronger and has been able to establish our autonomy from the Unit assigned to distribute our funding, as ACL has clearly defined in the State Plan DSE assurances they agree to every three years; however, we continue to witness disability services diminish and become less of a priority by them after absorbing the Disability Services Unit into PAC. It is deeply concerning to us that this is occurring, and we are hoping you will investigate this terrible injustice.

Respectfully,

The Nevada Statewide Independent Council