



# Northwest Justice Project

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César E. Torres  
Executive Director

April 3, 2020

Secretary Cheryl Strange  
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services  
1115 Washington Street SE  
Olympia, WA 98504  
Via email: [strance@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:strance@dshs.wa.gov)

Dear Secretary Strange:

We are writing to share our strong support for the concerns shared Disability Rights Washington, the ACLU of Washington, Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and Washington Defender Association as well as other advocates, in a letter sent to you yesterday.

The Northwest Justice Project is the statewide Legal Services Corporation-funded legal services organization in Washington. We have offices across the state, including a Tacoma office that contracts with the Department of Social and Health Services to advocate for patients of Western State Hospital (WSH) and an office in Spokane that has a similar contract to advocate for patients of Eastern State Hospital (ESH). We also do extensive advocacy on the rights of patients in other congregate care facilities across the state, as well as advocacy on behalf of clients in home and community-based settings.

In the course of our advocacy, we have noted with dismay the dire impact of COVID-19 on people with disabilities who are placed in WSH, ESH, and other large facilities. We appreciate your leadership in applying quickly for Medicaid waivers to provide you with greater flexibility, and we urge you to do more to quickly discharge patients into home and community-based settings where they will be safer during the pandemic, as outlined in yesterday's letter.

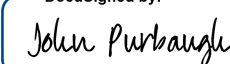
Thank you for your attention and responsiveness. We are in close contact with Kimberly Mosolf at Disability Rights Washington. Please also feel free to reach out to John Purbaugh at 206-707-0950 or [johnp@nwjustice.org](mailto:johnp@nwjustice.org) if you have questions or concerns.

Secretary Cheryl Strange


April 3, 2020

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Sincerely,

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cc: Kimberly Mosolf, Disability Rights Washington  
Christie Hedman, Washington Defender Association  
Michele Storms, American Civil Liberties Union of Washington  
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Sean Murphy, Assistant Secretary, BHA  
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Nicholas Williamson, Assistant Attorney General

Vanessa Torres Hernandez, Northwest Justice Project