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Via Facsimile (202) 205-8037
Via U.S. Mail to the address below
Via E-mail: Sharon.Lewis@acf.hhs.gov

October 16, 2010

Sharon Lewis, Commissioner
Administration on Developmental Disabilities
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Mail Stop HHH 405-D
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20447

Dear Ms. Lewis,

Thank you for your letter of September 14, 2010 in response to our complaint regarding Nila Benito's advocacy as Community Supports Coordinator for the FCIC, UCEDD, at the University of South Florida.

We are encouraged by your confirmation of Ms. Benito's dissemination of messages which could be viewed as use of "inflammatory and disparaging terms," affiliating these messages with a federally funded grant, prohibited by ACF policies (ADD-PI-01-1), and that ADD sent her a letter communicating this.

May we have a copy of the letter ADD sent to Ms. Benito? We would like to add this to our files.

In the interest of providing you with more complete information, I am enclosing a letter that Ms. Benito had published in the Tampa Tribune on May 17, 2010, in which she provided all of her UCEDD FCIC credentials thus affiliating her personal inflammatory opinions with the professional position that she enjoys via federally funded grants.

While we appreciate the conclusion of your response regarding her activities, we respectfully disagree with regard to Ms. Benito's actions in her "personal capacity." Since Ms. Benito is a "public figure," we think it is not reasonable to ask observers to take pause and consider from which e-mail account she sent a message, or at what time of day. As disability advocates, especially families, the needs of the disability community don't hold to standard office hours. As a representative of a federally funded (taxpayer) organization, she should be held to even higher standards.

Regarding the response from UCEDD Director, Lise Fox, this calls into question unverified assertions passed on to you for acceptance at face value:

1. Mr. Chapman has established an ADAPT chapter in Florida, through which he conducts his own personal outreach.

Babs Johnson (303-733-9324), official "Organizer" of National ADAPT in Denver, Co., on September 27, 2010, again confirmed that Mr. Chapman had never made an application to establish a chapter of ADAPT in Florida. Our first inquiry was made in April 2010. Ms. Johnson also again confirmed that there is no chapter listed in Florida nor is there such a designation such as Executive Director.

2. Mr. Chapman's position is funded with state dollars and not federal funds.

Director Fox appears to be unwilling to elaborate on the specific source of the funding used to support Mr. Chapman's activities. We have requested from the administration of USF, Mr. Gerard Solis and Dr. Judy Genshaft, if the position of Graduate Assistant at the FCIC carried any remuneration in the form of direct salary, or any other form of compensation relative to assistantships, grants, expense reimbursements, while under the supervision of Nila Benito. We never received a reply.

We understand that the UCEDD and FCIC are funded by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and assume that it is the responsibility of the ADD to ensure that restricted dollars are not used for prohibited activities.

We are, therefore, formally requesting that you personally investigate beyond the level of inquiring of Director Fox and Ms. Benito to verify exactly:

- 1) **What is the specific source of the state dollars that have been and are being used to fund Mr. Chapman's Graduate Assistantship and activities while under the supervision of Nila Benito &/or while "housed" within the FCIC and receiving the benefits there from?**
- 2) **What independent verifiable assurance is available from the accounting group or internal auditors or others that support the assertion that only State dollars have been used to support Mr. Chapman and that no Federal funds have been and/or are being used either directly or indirectly to compensate him or reimburse his expenses through the FCIC or the UCEDD?**

While your letter states, "there is no evidence to support Federal funds were used to support Richard Chapman's personal advocacy," we ask that you please revisit this conclusion and look further than the mere assertions of Director Fox and Ms. Benito and also consider the broader context of the nature and extent of the relationship between Mr. Chapman and Ms. Benito. Mr. Chapman is directly linked to Ms. Benito's supervisory authority whose position as Coordinator of FCIC is Federally funded by the ADD.

Other than the use of Mr. Chapman's time and mailing address, there are other relevant issues not addressed by Director Fox which demonstrate Ms. Benito's relationship with Richard Chapman:

- 1) Ms. Benito's confirmation and support of Mr. Chapman's position as Executive Director of Florida ADAPT

Ms. Benito referred to Richard Chapman our e-mailed complaints regarding her CEIDD posting, **STOP DISCRIMINATION, ABUSE, & SEGREGATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES!** (Mar. 26, 2010):

"I am finished discussing this issue with you. If you want more information, please feel free to email the author of the petition, Richard Chapman the executive director of ADAPT of Florida at _____". (Mar. 30, 2010 – p. 27)

- 2) Ms. Benito's statement, "ADAPT is a self-advocacy org that is currently housed within the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities." (p. 11)

Regardless of which address Mr. Chapman used to conduct his advocacy/lobbying activities, Ms. Benito gives direct or tacit approval to communications circulated by him since he is "housed" under the questionable identity of ADAPT within the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities and since she is his supervisor. In our view, she consequently bears responsibility for use of Federal funds through the ADD either directly or indirectly for these activities.

We would appreciate your continued assistance in assuring that our Federal tax dollars are supporting family advocates by carefully monitoring the activities of agencies your organization supports.

We thank you for your efforts to date and we look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Lila Klausman, Pres.
Parents Planning Programs (PPP), Inc.
Member, Family Care Council Area 7, Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Cc: Lise Fox, Director UCEDD
Judy Genshaft, Pres. USF
Gerard Solis, Senior Assistant to General Counsel, USF
Babs Johnson, Organizer, ADAPT National
Bryan Vaughn, Executive Director of the Governor's Commission on Disabilities
Gov. Charlie Crist

Attachment: "It doesn't take a special village", Tampa Tribune, May 17, 2010