



June 29, 2012

Dear AAIDD Leaders, Members, and Friends:

I have been honored and humbled to serve you as the 135th President of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

I would like to begin this letter by thanking the members of the Board for their service in governance and strategic planning to build a strong and sustainable organization. I particularly acknowledge Past President Dr. Michael Wehmeyer for his multifaceted service and leadership to the organization and President-elect Dr. Marc Tasse for his leadership in planning the 136th Annual Meeting of the Association, held last week in Charlotte, North Carolina, and for his leadership in the Association's comments to the American Psychiatric Association on their proposed revision to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* for the condition previously known as "mental retardation."

I have been very pleased to be a part of the AAIDD's activities to fulfill its goals to enhance the capacity of professionals who work with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities; participate in the development of a society that fully includes individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities; and build an effective, responsive, well-managed, responsibly governed, and sustainable organization.

I have a deep personal commitment to the development of a society that fully includes individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I kicked off my term as Board President with the 2011 conference, themed "Inclusive Communities: Pathways to Realizing the Vision," and followed with the appointment of a task force on inclusion chaired by Dr. Angela Novak-Amado. One of the most visible accomplishments of this taskforce was a very successful webinar series on elements of inclusion.

AAIDD continues to make great strides in enhancing the capacity of professionals who work with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the editors of AAIDD's highly ranked journals, Dr. Len Abbeduto and Dr. Glenn Fujiura, for their leadership in bringing important research findings to the attention of the field. Additional efforts to develop professional capacity by the Association include timely member-only communications, a newly revitalized book publishing program, a comprehensive SIS training program, and a rich professional education program. While AAIDD supported many types of educational events this year, I was particularly proud to be a part of the 2012 Disability Policy Seminar, which AAIDD cosponsored with five other national organizations to highlight and act on key policy issues important to people with disabilities and their families

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I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the work and contributions of our wonderfully talented and dedicated staff at the National Office. They are a “lean and mean” staff of 11 professionals who work hard toward the goal of making AAIDD an effective, responsive, and sustainable organization. What a debt of gratitude we owe them.

As I end my term as President, I would like to thank you, the members of this wonderful Association, for being a part of our community: a worldwide community where every member matters and we collectively work to advocate for AAIDD’s mission of promoting progressive policies, sound research, effective practices, and universal human rights for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

I am honored to have been President of AAIDD, an organization that has been my professional home for the last 22 years and will continue to so be for many years to come. We represent a wide variety of professionals and others in the United States, Canada, and around the world, and we are united by the ideal that each person with a disability has the right to develop his or her personal potential to the maximum extent possible, to satisfy his or her individual needs and preferences, and to become a contributing and participating member of the community.

I am pleased to pass the gavel to my esteemed colleague and treasured friend, Marc Tasse, who will be a wonderful President, and to acknowledge Dr. Maggie Nygren, who is an amazing Executive Director.

Warm Regards,



Sharon Gomez  
President of the Board, 2011–2012

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