

DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION RESEARCH COALITION

1501 M STREET, N.W. SUITE 700 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

October 25, 2019

Alison Cernich, Ph.D.
Deputy Director
Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute
of Child Health and Human Development
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Building 31, Room 2A32, MSC 2425
Bethesda, MD 20892-2425

Dear Deputy Director Cernich,

On behalf of the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Coalition (DRRC), we write to congratulate you on your recent appointment as the Deputy Director of the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and to sincerely thank you for your leadership of the National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research (NCMRR). Your tenure with NCMRR has left an indelible mark on the Center and on the rehabilitation science field writ large, and your expertise, enthusiasm, and spirit of collaboration has significantly advanced the state of rehabilitation and disability science at NIH and across the federal government. The disability and rehabilitation community greatly appreciates your efforts over these past few years.

While we trust in the ability of NIH leadership to conduct a successful selection process, we know it will be difficult to find a leader who will be able to match your talents. In fact, when we polled the DRRC member organizations for desired qualities of a new permanent director, one resounding response was to seek a “clone of Dr. Cernich.”

Your leadership at NCMRR has significantly advanced the stature, visibility, and coordination of medical rehabilitation research at the Center and across the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Your accessibility to the research, clinical and consumer communities has engendered a strong collaborative relationship between the Center and stakeholders in the field, and we hope that your openness will serve as a model for future Center leaders. Additionally, we applaud your guidance and stewardship of the refreshed NIH Rehabilitation Research Plan, which lays essential groundwork for rehabilitation medicine for years to come.

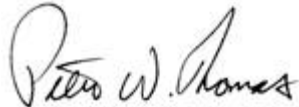
Under your direction, NCMRR has supported a wide range of projects that have been vital to people with disabilities and chronic conditions, including the development of the Limb Loss and Preservation Registry, the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies Initiative, and ongoing collaborations with the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research. You have expanded the Center’s global reach by representing the American medical rehabilitation research field through the World Health

Organization's Rehabilitation 2030 Initiative. Additionally, you led the successful implementation of Sec. 2040 of the 21st Century Cures Act and shepherded the utilization of the common definition for medical rehabilitation research throughout NIH. The progress of the Center over the past four years is directly attributable to your leadership, and we sincerely thank you for your management of NCMRR's efforts.

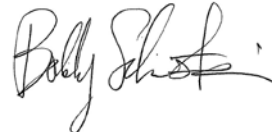
We also greatly appreciate your enthusiasm and tireless work to revitalize the role of the Rehabilitation Research Coordinating Committee at NIH. Over the years, the DRRC has heard from Institute leaders throughout NIH that your guidance has contributed greatly to the advancement of the field and the improvement of the Committee's efforts. Similarly, your participation in the Interagency Committee on Disability Research has been essential to maintaining focus and effective action by that Committee, and we eagerly await the development of the government-wide inventory on disability, independent living, and rehabilitation research, a project in which we understand you have been instrumental.

While we are saddened to see you leave the Center, we applaud NICHD for their recognition of your talents and look forward to maintaining a robust relationship with you in your new role. We know that you will continue to serve the disability and rehabilitation community in your expanded duties, and we look forward to our upcoming meeting on October 30th to congratulate you in person. Thank you again for all you have done to improve the lives of Americans with disabilities and chronic conditions, and to enhance the field of medical rehabilitation and disability research.

Sincerely,



Peter W. Thomas, J.D.
DRRC Coordinator



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American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine
American Physical Therapy Association
Association of Academic Physiatrists
American Occupational Therapy Association
Brain Injury Association of America
National Association of Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers

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