

A Statement on Persons with Disabilities from the Andrew Gillum for Governor Campaign

First and foremost, Floridians with disabilities deserve the same rights afforded to all. Most importantly, they must be given the ability to live independently within their chosen communities, and the opportunity to seek out and achieve their dreams and desires. Government plays an important role in supporting and ensuring this fundamental right. We must do a better job in this regard.

There are specific steps we can take to make our state a better place for people with disabilities. First, we must get a handle on the waiting list for services within the Home and Community Based Waiver. Too many Floridians have been denied critical services due to a lack of political will. This program is a lifeline for our most vulnerable citizens and their desire to live productive lives. The same can also be said for the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD). APD is filled with some of the most dedicated and hard-working public servants in the State of Florida and I look forward to giving them the necessary tools and funding to carry out their important mission. These people are on the front lines of the care continuum and I will not overlook the important role they play. Finally, it's essential that we connect people with disabilities and their families with the information, training, and resources they need to thrive in the community. That includes continued support for efforts that are unique to Florida, like The Annual Family Café, and others, as well as a strong commitment to empowering the key state agencies that serve Floridians with disabilities, and the dedicated, hardworking public servants that help them carry out their important mission.

I look forward to partnering with advocates in both the public and private sectors to help Floridians with disabilities be successful. I am all too aware that families who deal with challenges like these are already stretched to their limit, both emotionally and financially. Florida can do better, we *must* do better.