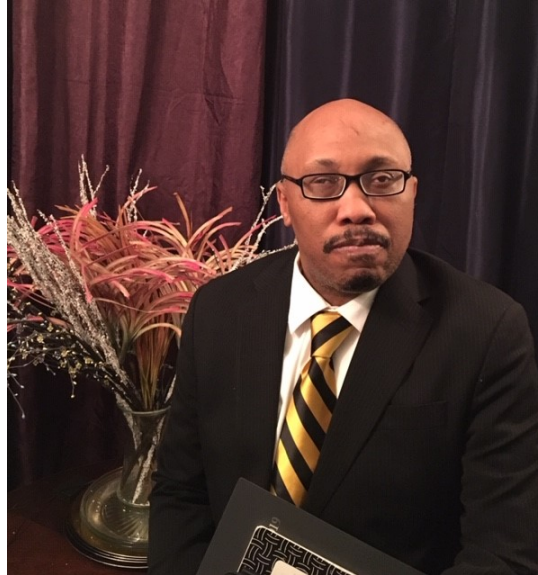


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The Importance of Community Engagement and advocacy in Developmental Disabilities

By: Ernest Hopkins III

Historically people with disabilities are socially and sometimes economical disinclined in federal and state policy issues and concerns. Its important that people with disabilities get involved in the day to day policy making efforts of our local state and federal legislative bodies. Its so very essential to engage our community leaders and to be heard, to have a voice, to have shared our life experiences as people living with disabilities in Wisconsin.

We the people of Wisconsin living with a developmental disability its important to be involved and take part in local events, to engage our community and to become socially vested in the fabric that makes us Wisconsinites.

To take an active role through advocacy and leadership in all aspects of our life makes us a conscious community with a higher voice.

Advocacy is defined as public support for or recommendation of a cause or policy.

"their **advocacy of** traditional family values" As we are a community made up of many races, creeds, social and economic backgrounds we are people first. The importance of community engagement and advocacy is essential to who we are and to our friends and families but most importantly our state for we are the people of Wisconsin.

For many years I have served in the areas of developmental disabilities advocacy and leadership throughout the southeastern United States. I understand we who are people with disabilities have needs and wants, necessities like all other populations and communities. However,

society often at times, considers us as “broken”, disabled, challenged, and let me not use the “R” word.

We are people first, for we are a community of educated, sophisticated brilliant, colorful attractive skilled human beings with feelings and emotions like other populations. Our community is never broken, we are whole and are a vibrant growing portion of society as people throughout the United States grows older. Let us never feel broken. We the community made up of persons living positive with developmental disabilities survive, thrive and we go forward. We are the people of Wisconsin and we are people who live with developmental disabilities. As a community we shall go forward this new year of 2019’ whole and with a conscious togetherness guided and rooted in advocacy and leadership.

Let’s go forward proudly as a community and make Wisconsin the best place to live for people with disabilities.