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## **Community Options Awarded \$300,000 Grant to Establish Innovative Self-Advocacy Project for People with Disabilities**

**Princeton, NJ** – Community Options, a national nonprofit that develops housing and employment for persons with disabilities, is pleased to announce a three-year, \$300,000 grant from the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities to establish a Leadership Academy for Civic Engagement and Self-Advocacy.

“The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities has been a staple and visionary arm for the State to enhance the lives of people with disabilities through forward thinking state-of-the-art implementation,” said Robert Stack, President and CEO of Community Options. “This grant will enable us to train people with disabilities seeking to be civic leaders to not only improve their own lives, but also for their peers.”

The Leadership Academy will build a new generation of self-advocacy by creating training opportunities for youths and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Community Options will identify a diverse group of participants from throughout the State of New Jersey who are interested in forming a self-advocacy speaker’s bureau. The speaker’s bureau will participate through legislative testimony and present at statewide conferences.

“Community Options’ proposal was selected through a highly competitive process,” said Mercedes Witowsky, Executive Director of the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities. “They have demonstrated themselves as a valuable partner in improving the lives of people with disabilities. We look forward to working with them to train the next generation of self-advocates.”

Community Options will partner with communications and advocacy experts to conduct trainings. People with disabilities will lead the project from inception, by selecting training topics, developing content for presentations, and managing the process of marketing and promoting the speaker’s bureau to government and business leaders. Organizations including the New Jersey Business and Industry Association will host the speaker’s bureau to inform its member organizations on best practices to creating inclusive and supportive workplaces.

“With our very active and passionate mission of increasing opportunities for the I/DD community, NJBIA is both thrilled for Community Options that they are able to offer this program and excited to assist and facilitate this opportunity for future speakers,”

said NJBIA Chief of Government Affairs Chrissy Buteas. "There is much to be done in enhancing the education, understanding and awareness of disability law and its impacts on the I/DD community and we look forward to connecting these speakers with employers who will only benefit from their insights."

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About Community Options, Inc.:

For over 30 years, Community Options has developed housing and employment supports for people with disabilities – serving thousands of people from over 40 offices across 10 states. Community Options provides advocacy assistance to empower people with disabilities because all people – regardless of ability level – should live and work in the community with dignity, choice and self-determination. For more information please visit our website: [www.comop.org](http://www.comop.org) and to follow along with the #AllItTakes campaign, search #AllItTakes on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.