**POG presentation to NACDD directors June 10, 2020**

Ken:

First I would like to thank Angela for inviting us to speak to you today.

I would like to give a plug to the grass roots organization I work for. As Angela said my name is Ken Capone and I am the Director of People on the Go of Maryland. We have been in existence for 30 years as the self-advocacy organization for the state. We have been state and nationally recognized for our work. Our biggest accomplishment yet was the passing of the Equal Employment Act; which as of October of this year; Maryland will have successfully transitioned away from 14 C certificates usage and sub minimum wages for people with disabilities. And a shameless plug: We can’t say enough about the support and partnership we have with our Maryland D D Council.

This has been a crazy ride over the last 13 weeks! Like many people, we stopped going in the office and canceled all speaking and training engagements going forward. For us that meant having to figure out how do we continue with our grant work in a meaningful way without in person interaction over an undetermined amount of time? And POG staff and leadership wanted to help, but how? We convened a board meeting and discussed support needs and current work assignments for POG staff; POG leadership discussed what was important to members and how we could keep them informed and engaged. I assume that you all were asking yourself some similar questions. Just sifting through National, state and agency guidance daily has been overwhelming. We had no idea what we were in for. POG and the MD D D council work together on coalitions and committees to protect the rights of the individuals served by the state DD Administration. These meetings have not stopped, but just now are accessed on virtual platforms. Since the pandemic these calls are to support the work of state agencies, community services providers, individuals and families to make sure that we have a consistent message to all in plain language and people are getting what they need.

Ken: Angela if you could put up the slides. I look forward to hearing what other DD Councils are doing around the country with supports for self-advocacy groups. Here are some of the things we have done over the last 13 weeks and will continue for the foreseeable.

* POG leadership decided to create a weekly member support call; open to members and self-advocates around the state; Each week we add more people that join and participate.
* We Created a POG member lead training on the use of virtual online programs – POG advocate volunteered to kickoff our weekly meetings with a lesson on virtual technology and the features of the platform we use.
* Voter technical assistance – P O G lead trainer and disability rights Maryland voter advocate stepped up to make sure during our weekly calls leading up to the primary election all members and their families were informed and able to vote. This will continue on as new changes and guidance comes out heading towards November.
* We Created Virtual Advocacy 101 presentation – introduction to self-advocacy; advocacy groups and legislative policy work – Conducted the first one with Kennedy Krieger Krieger project SEARCH interns and staff. The next one is schedule for a new startup virtual advocacy group.
* Forming new partnerships to develop virtual self-advocacy groups around the state. This Tami will talk a little more about.
* First Virtual Quarterly meeting – Guest Speaker Judith Heumann – disability rights activist, author and leader of the Independent Living movement. We had over 30 people from around the state take part in our P O G member quarterly meeting. Judy spoke about her history, the Netflix movie Crip Camp and her new book Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist. Lots of great questions were asked and answered. The quarterly meeting inspired a number of advocates to form a book club that Tami will facilitate. And these are just the things we are working on that we felt fit the outcome measurements for our grant with the Maryland D D council. POG is also working to development our Project STIR (steps towards Independence and responsibility) into a training that will create module trainings that are used in a virtual setting to learn self-advocacy skill building. We currently have a robust 2 day in person training for Project STIR.

I would like to turn it over to Tami to discuss future needs

**Tami: Where does the future lead us:**

* Future Training needs
* Collaboration across virtual platforms
* Expanded look on Self advocacy groups

Technology expertise support; technical assistance that will support with building a strong network of self-advocates around the country with support from each council. I believe the POG has developed a model that can be implemented to creates effect leaders in disability policy, training and legislator education. Throughout this pandemic I often thought about how we will have to continue to adapt and get better at providing space for open dialog collaboration and resource sharing that is more than just sharing on social media. POG wants to collaborate with providers and local self-advocacy groups to be able to meet; get involved and share resources. What we realized was that P O G members were feeling isolated, lonely and disconnected. A virtual platform seemed to motivate people to share resources, create online friendships and trainings that we would not have been able to fund if it were in person.

Ken: The Maryland DD council stepped in with grant funding for providers to purchase items to meet the needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families to promote engagement with peers, alleviate anxiety due to social distancing, and/or increase positive shared experiences. We were finding that many individuals really needed technology like tables, Ipad’s and various other electronics. Along with technology is training needs. This is a support area where the council can help to fund training initiatives that support peer to peer training on technology usage.