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To: Kester, Tonykester@aging.sc.gov
Date: 7/6/2016 1:21:38 PM
Subject: A Dialogue on Diversity, Disability, and Civil Rights in Kansas City

July 06, 2016

Blog: A Dialogue on Diversity, Disability, and Civil Rights in Kansas City

By Aaron Bishop, Commissioner, Administration on Disabilities

In my time at ACL, I have been a part of many conversations about disability and diversity. Usually, these involve disability advocates talking to each other about the need for more diverse voices in our movement and greater cultural and linguistic competency in our programs. These conversations, and the actions they inspire, make the disability community stronger. They must continue, but they are just one part of a larger picture.

Last week I had the privilege of participating in a community conversation in Kansas City, Mo. that was unique.

The group of more than 20 local leaders was convened by ACL, Congressman Emanuel Cleaver, and the Institute for Human Development (IHD) at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. It was memorable because it built on these conversations within the disability community to consider how we could accomplish more by collaborating with local leaders working on other civil and human rights issues.

Congressman Cleaver kicked off the event by reminding us that diversity has made our country stronger and more beautiful. He spoke about the contributions of the Mormon community as an example of this diversity. He also spoke about the contributions of African Americans with disabilities as an example of the diverse subgroups that exist within every group. Congressman Cleaver emphasized the importance of viewing our civil rights work as connected, speaking of disability rights in the context of Dr. Martin Luther King's fight for civil rights and quoting Muhammad Ali, who once said, "Everyone needs someone in their corner."

[Read about themes and lessons from the Kansas City dialogue.](#)

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