

Award: IDF Movement Building
Recipient: EverThrive Illinois
Presenter: Adani Sanchez

I would like to ask Sessy Nyman to join me on stage.

Sessy is the Executive Director of EverThrive Illinois.

The Illinois Disciples Foundation Movement Building Award honors the organizations and individuals that actively work to build social justice movements. Tonight, we recognize EverThrive Illinois with this award for fostering collaboration, providing support, and fighting like crazy to protect the advances in health care brought about by the Affordable Care Act. EverThrive pushes for an Illinois that “works towards equity and social justice, fosters the development of healthy families, and provides fair access to quality health care - the basic rights of all human beings.”

EverThrive has consistently been at the forefront of efforts to protect and improve healthcare in Illinois for many years. Some of you may recognize EverThrive by their former name, the Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition.

We first worked closely with EverThrive on legislation to improve Medicaid managed care provider directories. EverThrive’s Alicia Siani and Nadeen Israel let us know about every step of advocating for HB 6213 – sharing notes from meetings and asking for our feedback, because they recognized that we are working on the front lines with consumers every day, and we could contribute that on-the-ground perspective. Alicia and Nadeen worked closely with me to prepare me for providing testimony on this bill at a legislative hearing – it was my first time doing that, and their support and guidance was extremely helpful!

EverThrive worked very closely with our own State Representative, Carol Ammons, to sponsor the legislation. Rep. Ammons is also an award recipient this evening, and you’ll hear more about her later.

Thanks to the collaboration with EverThrive, and all their hard work to make Medicaid Managed Care work better for consumers, and thanks to the leadership of Rep. Ammons, the bill sailed through the committee, and eventually became law here in Illinois!

Following last November’s national elections, whenever the fate of the ACA seems to be up in the air, EverThrive reaches out to ask if we need anything. They helped us gather information and data that we can share with our representatives and fellow constituents in the IL-13th and 15th Congressional Districts. They joined and help lead the coalition with other organizations across to state to Protect Our Care, and then they actually do the work – they continuously share information with the public through panels, published data and resources, and policy analysis for others to use – we depend on those e-mails from EverThrive’s Kathy Waligora, to stay current up to the minute. And again, as EverThrive staff see us working to protect the ACA and Medicaid, they reach out directly to offer support to our organization and others working on the issues. They are always available to answer questions about state level policies or movement on state and federal legislation, no matter how detailed or complicated.

To build a movement takes many things, and communities need support – we can't be everywhere at once – and communities need leadership and guidance they can trust from organizations willing to take a stand and speak out publicly against policies that hurt our community.

Ms. Nyman, we thank you and EverThrive, and your amazing staff, including Alicia Siani and Nadeen Israel, for building, supporting, and leading the movement for healthcare justice and access. As things move quickly at the state and national level, organizations like EverThrive IL will be even more essential to protecting our care. On behalf of Champaign County Health Care Consumers, I am honored to present the Illinois Disciples Foundation Movement Building Award to EverThrive Illinois.