

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 2, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

As you begin negotiations for the next coronavirus stimulus package, we request that you provide a minimum of \$30 million in financial support—along with specific guidance for the use of those funds to the Developmental Disabilities network, reauthorized by *the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000*, which includes the State Councils on Developmental Disabilities (CDD or Councils), the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs), and the Protection and Advocacy (P&As) programs as they work to mitigate the health and economic effects of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic on individuals with developmental disabilities.

Americans with developmental disabilities are amongst those whose lives are most disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has warned that people with disabilities may be at a higher risk of contracting the disease.¹ Additionally, these individuals rely on a wide array of in-home services to maintain their health and well-being, many of which have been interrupted or completely halted as a result of the pandemic.² While there is a lack of national data on the impact of COVID-19 on people with disabilities, reports have revealed the disproportionate effect the pandemic is having on the community.^{3,4} As the

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Coronavirus Disease 2019, People with Disabilities,” <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-disabilities.html>.

² Washington Post, “For those needing in-home care, a dire decision amid a pandemic,” Chelsea Janes, May 5, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/for-those-needing-in-home-care-a-dire-decision-amid-a-pandemic/2020/05/05/e271d18c-88b5-11ea-ac8a-fe9b8088e101_story.html.

³ New York Times, “Homes for the Disabled See a Surge of COVID-19,” Danny Hakim, April 17, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/08/nyregion/coronavirus-disabilities-group-homes.html?fbclid=IwAR0oFLCIfEgFe9H2vrfMMEN6WZZdIOBiKraJN1erYXHwADqpd68uvcMg0NM;> Washington Post, “Group homes for disabled adults grapple with the spread of coronavirus,” Rebecca Tan, April 18, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/group-homes-for-disabled-adults-grapple-with-the-spread-of-coronavirus/2020/04/18/ac2ecae2-7ff2-11ea-a3ee-13e1ae0a3571_story.html.

⁴ NPR, “COVID-19 Infections And Deaths Are Higher Among Those With Intellectual Disabilities,” Joseph Shapiro, June 9, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/09/872401607/covid-19-infections-and-deaths-are-higher-among-those-with-intellectual-disabili>.

pandemic continues and services designed to support the nation's most vulnerable crumble, individuals with developmental disabilities are increasingly at risk.

CDDs, UCEDDs, and P&As are federally-funded programs under the *Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000*. These entities are charged with working to identify and solve the issues facing individuals with developmental disabilities in their communities. They provide training and technical assistance to policymakers as they work to remove barriers that prevent individuals with development disabilities from having their voices heard. The 56 Councils, 57 P&As, and 67 UCEDDs across the United States also work closely with local, state, and federal governments to develop robust policy solutions aimed at empowering these individuals and promoting self-determination.⁵ During the pandemic, these programs have rapidly stood up virtual platforms to ensure that the voices and needs of individuals with developmental disorders can be heard and met even as traditional health care and advocacy is interrupted. They continue to ensure that state and federal responses to the pandemic consider and account for the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. However, the economic consequences of the pandemic have jeopardized the ability of the Developmental Disabilities Network programs to appropriately respond to and meet the needs of these those they serve.

To mitigate the harm done by the COVID-19 pandemic, the House of Representatives' *Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act* included \$10 million for the Developmental Disabilities Network programs.⁶ We applaud this provision of funds, but urge House and Senate leadership, as they continue to negotiate the next coronavirus package, to provide, at a minimum, \$30 million for the CDDs, UCEDDs, and P&As in the final text to address their increased need. These three networks should work collaboratively to use the appropriated funds to address needs and fill gaps for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities due to COVID-19 pandemic. Such needs should be identified by the members of the Developmental Disabilities Network in each state and territory in collaboration with stakeholders. Issues to be addressed might include the lack of access to technology and connectivity for people with developmental disabilities during the public health emergency; access to reliable home and community based services; and recruitment, training, retention and compensation for direct support professionals and personal care attendants.

As the pandemic continues to disrupt lives across the country, particularly those of individuals with disabilities, federal support for Councils is all the more crucial. Without federal support and guidance, the CCDs, P&As, and UCEDDs will struggle to continue to serve and advocate for and with people with developmental disabilities. As such, we request that the next COVID-19 stimulus legislation provide continued support for these programs and contain specific language

⁵ Administration for Community Living, "Fact Sheet: State Councils on Developmental Disabilities," https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/programs/2016-11/Councils_factsheet.pdf; Association of University Centers on Disabilities, <https://www.aucd.org/template/page.cfm?id=667>; Administration for Community Living, "State Protection and Advocacy Systems," [https://acl.gov/programs/aging-and-disability-networks/state-protection-advocacy-systems#:~:text=Protection%20and%20Advocacy%20Systems%20\(P%26As,providing%20agencies%20in%20their%20states.](https://acl.gov/programs/aging-and-disability-networks/state-protection-advocacy-systems#:~:text=Protection%20and%20Advocacy%20Systems%20(P%26As,providing%20agencies%20in%20their%20states.)

⁶ S.6800, The Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/6800>.

identifying the best use of these funds. This will allow the Developmental Disability Network programs to continue to provide crucial support to individuals with developmental disabilities and ensure their voices are heard.

We appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator