June 27, 2025

The Honorable Shelly Moore Capito, Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt, Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Moore Capito and Aderholt and Ranking Members Baldwin and DeLauro,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations of the Developmental Disabilities, Autism, and Family Supports Taskforce for the Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities (CCD), we write to express our deep concern about the Administration's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget proposal and urge Congress to reject the harmful recommendations it contains with regard to the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs).

The Administration's proposal to eliminate the UCEDDs, longstanding, congressionally authorized programs with over six decades of bipartisan support, is both dangerous and misguided. UCEDDs are not political programs. They are required by federal law in every U.S. state and territory under Subtitle D of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (P.L. 106–402). The DD Act mandates the existence of at least one UCEDD in each state and territory as part of the national Developmental Disabilities Network (DD Network), alongside State Councils on Developmental Disabilities (Councils) and Protection and Advocacy Systems (P&As). This structure was intentionally created by

Congress to ensure a coordinated, evidence-based approach to supporting people with developmental disabilities across the country.

UCEDDs have served as vital pillars of the national disability service infrastructure. These centers conduct evidence-based research, provide early diagnosis and intervention services, train professionals across disciplines, support families and self-advocates, and advance inclusive practices in education, employment, and healthcare.

We are particularly alarmed by the budget justification's suggestion that UCEDD functions can be absorbed by the Independent Living (IL) program:

"The FY 2026 request for Independent Living is $228,183,000. It includes a proposal allowing the expanded funding to be used to continue the activities previously provided by University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Developmental Disabilities Projects of National Significance, the Limb Loss Resource Center, and the Paralysis Resource Center, and providing Voting Access for People with Disabilities. Allowing funding in each state to be distributed based on state need increases program flexibility and improves the ability to target funding as needed."

This proposed consolidation fails to recognize the distinct missions, structures, and statutory authorities of each of these programs. The Independent Living program, while vital to the disability community, does not have the specialized academic infrastructure, developmental disability focus, or legal mandate to carry out the mission of the UCEDDs. UCEDDs are university-based centers engaged in interdisciplinary training, applied research, policy development, and service delivery tailored to people with developmental disabilities. They serve as trusted partners to state systems, school districts, providers, and families in responding to urgent needs and promoting long-term systems change.

Eliminating five distinct programs, each with its own mandate and community, and then consolidating their funding and charge under one funding stream is not streamlining; it is dismantling. It will reduce accountability, weaken capacity, and ultimately harm the very people these programs were designed to support. Moreover, distributing funds based on undefined "state need" rather than established statutory programs undermines decades of bipartisan Congressional work to build a coherent national disability infrastructure.

The President's budget proposal follows a troubling trend of dismantling community-based programs and higher education partnerships that have enabled people with disabilities to live, learn, work, and thrive in their communities. If enacted, the elimination of UCEDDs would harm people with developmental disabilities in every part of the country, rural, urban, red state, and blue state alike. UCEDDs help families navigate complex systems, evaluate young children for developmental delays, support inclusive education practices,

train doctors and direct support professionals, and develop new models of service delivery that improve lives and save public dollars.

We appreciate the Subcommittee's longstanding bipartisan support for UCEDDs and the broader disability services and research infrastructure. Your leadership is essential now more than ever. We ask you to fully fund the UCEDD program at a minimum of $43.1 million in FY 2026 to sustain these critical centers and to reject proposals that target disability infrastructure through misleading rhetoric and unworkable consolidations.

We thank you for your attention to this urgent request and for your continued commitment to the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities across the lifespan.

Sincerely,

Access Ready Inc.
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association on Health and Disability
American Music Therapy Association
American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)
American Therapeutic Recreation Association
Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs
Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Autism Society of America
Autism Speaks
Autistic People of Color Fund
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Communication 4 ALL
CommunicationFIRST
Disability Belongs
Division For Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)
Epilepsy Foundation of America
Family Voices National
Institute for Exceptional Care
Lakeshore Foundation
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Down Syndrome Society
National Health Law Program

National Respite Coalition
Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation
TASH
TDIforAccess
The Advocacy Institute
The Arc of the United States
The Center for Public Representation
The Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities
United Spinal Association