October 31, 2023

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities (CCD) Employment and Training Task Force, we ask you to take all necessary steps to proceed with a prompt Senate vote to confirm Dante Allen as Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration at the Department of Education. CCD is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration, and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society free from racism, ableism, sexism, and xenophobia, as well as LGBTQ+ based discrimination and religious intolerance. The Employment and Training Task Force deals with issues related to federal employment programs and policies affecting economic self-sufficiency and opportunity for people with disabilities.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) is critical in the oversight and support of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, which provides vital services to individuals with disabilities to support their employment, independence, and integration into the community and the competitive labor market. President Biden has made a commitment to ensuring that opportunities for advancement for people with disabilities is a priority of the Administration. However, the Commissioner role at RSA has remained vacant. This calls into question the strength of that commitment and contributes to a lack of focus on the needs of Americans with disabilities.

Mr. Allen’s nomination has been stalled in the Senate since May 2023, and we are urging you to prioritize moving his nomination forward. By confirming Mr. Allen, the vocational rehabilitation system gains critical visibility that is lost due to the absence of a Commissioner at RSA. RSA needs an effective advocate and leader to spearhead the vocational rehabilitation program. The vocational rehabilitation program deserves a leader who brings a vision to connect innovation, diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility for all. Mr. Allen’s professional background and personal experience as a person with a disability make him especially qualified to lead RSA.
Mr. Allen currently serves as the Executive Director for CalABLE, California’s qualified federal ABLE Act savings and investment program for people with disabilities. With his leadership, CalABLE has become the fastest growing ABLE program across the United States. His prior professional background includes an impressive record of leadership in public health systems, and he has been a longtime advocate for disability rights. As Commissioner of RSA, Mr. Allen will ensure that vocational rehabilitation services are delivered within a framework of accountability and efficiency. More importantly, Mr. Allen will be a leader who can advocate for and advance VR’s work in a dual customer environment – supporting individuals in their career journey as well as supporting the business community and the general labor market as a whole in reducing and eliminating barriers to employment and in hiring qualified candidates to meet current labor market needs.

We urge you to advance the nomination of Dante Allen to be the Commissioner of RSA as soon as possible.

Thank you for your attention to our recommendations.

If you have any questions, please contact any of the co-chairs of the Employment and Training Task Forces: Alicia Epstein (aepstein@sourceamerica.org), Julie Christensen (julie@apse.org), or Rick Webster (rwebster@nib.org <rwebster@nib.org>).