



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

March 6, 2020

The Honorable Maggie Hassan
United States Senator
324 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
United States Senator
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Hassan and Senator Collins:

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Long-Term Services & Supports (LTSS) Task Force support *Recognizing the Role of Direct Support Professionals Act (S. 3369)*. 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. The LTSS Task Force focuses on ensuring that people with disabilities and aging adults have access to the LTSS, particularly Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), they need to live, work and participate in their communities.

We strongly support the bill's call for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to compile precise employment data on Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), frontline workers who support people with disabilities so they can have full and independent lives. This data is needed to inform the creation of policies to strengthen this important workforce and ultimately, improve the quality of life of people with disabilities.

BLS collects employment data through a standard occupational code (SOC). Currently, BLS classifies DSPs in the broader SOC of personal care aides (PCAs) and home health aides (HHAs). Combined, PCAs and HHAs are some of the most needed occupations in the country, requiring over 1 million new workers over the next decade. However, the highly tailored nature of DSPs' work makes their duties more diverse than those of PCAs and HHAs and requires different skills. Additionally, DSPs' work is entirely funded by Medicaid, while PCAs' and HHAs' funding streams include private pay. Your bill requiring BLS to document those differences will lead to stronger policymaking on this issue.

The lack of a DSP-specific SOC hinders the creation of effective policies for this largely invisible workforce. Without specific federal data, states do not have adequate tools to project employment trends and/or establish realistic wage rates. States heavily rely on SOC data to determine the rates paid to providers of disability supports, including the cost of DSP wages. The lack of data also means the federal government does not have a strong sense of how states are investing in this workforce. This is leading to missed opportunities to strengthen this workforce, which is undergoing a massive retention and recruitment crisis with a 51 percent yearly average turnover rate. The crisis in turn has serious repercussions for the well-being of people with disabilities. As such, we hope your SOC legislation will give policymakers the tools they need to ensure stable disability supports.

We thank you for your commitment to individuals with disabilities and seniors and their DSPs. We look forward to passing this important legislation.

Sincerely,

American Association on Health and Disability
American Network of Community Options & Resources (ANCOR)
The Arc of the United States
Autism Society of America
Autism Speaks
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)
CommunicationFIRST
Easterseals
The Jewish Federations of North America
Justice in Aging
Lutheran Services in America Disability Network
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Down Syndrome Congress
United Spinal Association