

The Disability and Aging Collaborative &



March 18, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leaders Schumer and McConnell and Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (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 Disability and Aging Collaborative (DAC) is a coalition of approximately 40 national organizations that work together to advance long-term services and support policy at the federal level. Formed in 2009, the DAC was one of the first coordinated efforts to bring together disability and aging organizations. The undersigned CCD and DAC members write to share our thanks for recognizing the needs of people with disabilities and aging adults in the American Rescue Plan.

As we wrote several times in the past year, people with disabilities and older adults are particularly at risk as COVID-19 spreads across the country, facing high risk of complications and death if exposed to the virus and needing to isolate to protect themselves. State HCBS programs struggle to continue to provide these life-sustaining, daily, in-home services in the face of staff shortages due to sickness, self-isolation, and childcare needs; low wages; and lack of protective equipment even in the face of higher infection risk. Simultaneously, with a growing number of uninsured in the country, State Medicaid agencies are experiencing

increases in enrollment. As states face budget crises, they are responding by making cuts to Medicaid, and waiver services like HCBS remain at risk. HCBS are at particular risk because under the Federal Medicaid law, they are considered optional, and so when cuts to state budgets come due to the stress and strain from the pandemic, HCBS may be on the chopping block.

We appreciate your efforts to include a dedicated funding stream in the American Rescue Plan to address many of these needs. The targeted FMAP enhancement to strengthen and expand access to Medicaid HCBS for one year will allow state HCBS programs to begin to rebound after a year without support. This year of funding was desperately needed to keep people with disabilities and older adults out of large dangerous congregate settings, such as nursing facilities and other institutions, where COVID-19 infections and deaths are significantly more likely and which are frequently the center of COVID-19 outbreaks.

We urge lawmakers and leadership to work closely with CMS to ensure swift implementation of this new support for HCBS. We also urge lawmakers and leadership, as you turn to recovery, infrastructure and other priorities, to continue your efforts to invest in the infrastructure of HCBS provision, and the workforce that provides these critical services, particularly given the expirations of the FMAP enhancement on March 31 of next year, more funding will be needed so that that does not turn into a cliff. Congress must act to continue to address the serious, destabilizing deficits facing our nation's only publicly funded long-term care system by including long-term funding and investments in HCBS infrastructure. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Nicole Jorwic (jorwic@thearc.org).

Sincerely,

Alliance for Retired Americans
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association on Health and Disability
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
American Network of Community Options & Resources (ANCOR)
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Physical therapy Association
American Therapeutic Recreation Association
The Arc of the United States
Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
Autism Society of America
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Brain Injury Association of America
Caring Across Generations

Center for Eldercare Improvement, Altarum
Center for Public Representation
Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation
CommunicationFIRST
Community Catalyst
CureSMA
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)
Easterseals
Epilepsy Foundation
Jewish Federations of North America
Justice in Aging
Lakeshore Foundation
LeadingAge
Lutheran Services in America - Disability Network
Meals on Wheels America
Medicare Rights Center
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National ADAPT
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association for Home Care and Hospice
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council on Aging
National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Health Law Program (NHeLP)
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization on Disability
National PACE Association
National Respite Coalition
National Senior Corps Association
Network of Jewish Human Services Organization
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies
Special Needs Alliance
TASH
Well Spouse Association
United Spinal Association
World Institute on Disability