

The Disability and Aging Collaborative &



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

June 5, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The undersigned member organizations of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), Disability and Aging Collaborative (DAC), and other state and national organizations write to urge you to include the vital needs of people with disabilities and aging adults in the next COVID-19 relief package.

While the COVID-19 legislative packages passed by Congress thus far were expansive, they all but ignored the critical needs of the disability and aging communities. Thankfully, the HEROES Act that passed the House on May 15, 2020 did include several provisions imperative to the lives of people with disabilities and aging adults. These provisions must remain in the bill that ultimately passes the Senate.

In particular, the dedicated funding for Medicaid Home and Community-based (HCBS) services is of utmost importance for the disability and aging communities. Those funds are necessary to support the workforce that provides critical services to people with disabilities and aging adults, the service providers that employ that workforce, and the people who rely on those services to live safely in their homes and communities. The home and community-based service system, already overburdened before the pandemic, does not have the resources it needs to safely support people with disabilities and aging adults through this crisis. Without additional resources, aging adults and people with disabilities will be forced to leave their homes and communities and move into congregate settings, a failure to safeguard their civil rights and a

grave risk to their health--as demonstrated by severe and persistent outbreaks in nursing facilities, institutions and other congregate settings.

We were pleased to see that the HEROES Act included a broad FMAP increase for Medicaid. Millions of people with disabilities, aging adults and their families rely on the Medicaid system to support them in their homes and communities and for their other healthcare needs. When faced with budget crises and other stressors, states have often responded by cutting Medicaid benefits, eligibility or payments to providers. During a pandemic it is imperative that funding flows to states to support the stability of the Medicaid program. We urge you to support a broad FMAP increase and urge you to maintain the strong maintenance of effort (MOE) protections that were included in the Families First Act. Any weakening of the MOE would put Medicaid coverage, eligibility and services at risk.

The broad FMAP enhancement, while important, is not targeted to vitally important HCBS programs, which every state relies on to keep people out of, or enable them to transition from, institutions. Because HCBS are optional Medicaid services, they are some of the most at risk for cuts in budget crises, placing people with disabilities and older adults at serious risk of unnecessary institutionalization. The funding dedicated to HCBS is necessary to keep people with disabilities and aging adults safely in their homes and communities. Therefore, we again urge that the package ultimately passed in the Senate MUST INCLUDE the targeted 10 percent FMAP increase for HCBS included in the House package in addition to a broader FMAP increase for all Medicaid services.

We must act now to prevent much of the worst impact of this outbreak, and we are grateful for the prompt action so far taken. We urge the Senate to address the serious, destabilizing deficits facing our Nation's only publicly funded long-term care system by including both the broad enhanced FMAP and the targeted enhanced FMAP for HCBS in its coronavirus response package. For additional information or questions, feel free to contact CCD LTSS and DAC co-chair Nicole Jorwic: jorwic@thearc.org.

Sincerely,