



April 16, 2021

Alison Barkoff
Acting Administrator and Assistant Secretary for Aging
Administration for Community Living
330 C St SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Acting Administrator Barkoff:

On behalf of the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), I write to express support for the Administration for Community Living's (ACL) partnership with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to invest \$100 million to increase the disability community's access to COVID-19 vaccines. As you work with grant recipients to implement this funding, we urge you to allow and encourage the use of this funding to vaccinate Direct Support Professionals and educate them on the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination.

ANCOR is a national, nonprofit trade association representing more than 1,600 private community providers of services to people with disabilities who are funded almost exclusively by Medicaid, particularly the HCBS program. Combined, we support over one million individuals with disabilities, and work to shape policy, share solutions and strengthen community. The Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) our members employ have been on the frontlines of the pandemic. DSPs help people with disabilities remain safe at home rather than in congregate settings where they are more likely to contract COVID-19, by assisting with essential tasks such as grocery shopping, daily hygiene and making good health decisions.

The well-being of DSPs cannot be separated from the well-being of the people they support because of the intimate nature of some of the tasks they perform. As such, vaccinating DSPs against COVID-19 helps maintain the well-being of people with disabilities. The importance of this cannot be understated given that people with disabilities are more likely to die than the general population if they contract COVID-19. Finally, vaccinating DSPs will help remedy broader inequities surrounding vaccine access, given that a large share of the DSP workforce is drawn from communities of color who have struggled to access COVID-19 vaccinations. Funding vaccination drives targeted at DSPs will be a strategic investment as this nation seeks to combat new surges of COVID-19.

If you have any questions on this topic, please reach out to me at smeek@ancor.org. We look forward to working with you on this important topic and thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Meek". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sarah Meek
Senior Director of Legislative Affairs