



April 10, 2020

Re: The Department's Forthcoming Allocations for Medicaid-Funded Community Disability Service Providers

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II, Secretary
United States Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

On behalf of the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), the nation's leading voice of disability service providers, we write to acknowledge the extraordinary leadership of our nation's health and human services department during these uncertain times, and to follow up on the urgent request we sent to the Department dated March 31, 2020.

ANCOR's members—the backbone of community-based disability supports system in the United States—are in dire straits. The 1,600+ organizations that comprise our membership deliver high-quality, long-term supports and services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism across the country through Medicaid-funded Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers and Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF-IID). The situation wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic within which these providers deliver services is nothing short of horrifying. The stories we feared, are now reality, as evidenced in New York's disability community where, ["As of Monday, 1,100 of the 140,000 developmentally disabled people monitored by the state had tested positive for the virus, state officials said. One hundred five had died — a rate, far higher than in the general population, that echoes the toll in some nursing homes."](#)

Although the situation facing these providers is gut-wrenching, we are encouraged to see that the bipartisan CARES legislation that appropriated \$100 billion for the Public Health and Social Services emergency relief fund is distributing aid to hospitals and other health care providers on the frontlines of the coronavirus response in a fast and transparent manner.

With HHS' allocation of the first tranche for Medicare services announced earlier this week, we expect the Department will soon follow suit with a second tranche of funding for Medicaid services that will specifically include providers of long term care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, distribution of which we strongly encourage follows a [similar model as the one established for Medicare](#), providing payments (i.e., not loans) in amounts equal to 6.2% of providers' 2019 Medicaid revenue. ANCOR estimates this would be approximately \$8.3 billion consistent with a recent projection made by The President's Council on Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (PCPID), as referenced in our original request.

As we wrote to you in our previous letter, the workforce of Medicaid-funded disability service providers was in crisis long before the COVID-19 pandemic. *A survey conducted of providers earlier this winter revealed 62% had stopped taking new referrals and/or were closing programs.* With turnover rates exceeding 50 percent and with one in five direct support positions remaining vacant nationwide, enhanced immediate additional federal grants are **critical** to protect the safety of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, this

direct support workforce and the financial sustainability of the essential supports to ensure community inclusion. As the coronavirus has profoundly exacerbated this workforce crisis, these valuable resources are needed more now than ever before.

We continue to remain committed to partnering with the Department as it seeks to ensure that precious limited resources reach those who need them the most. Moreover, we extend our deep gratitude for the leadership the Department has already exhibited, and for the difficult but important work that remains ahead. If there is anything we can do to bolster the efforts of the Department as it seeks to respond to this unprecedented crisis, please do not hesitate to contact Shannon McCracken, ANCOR's Vice President for Government Relations, at smccracken@ancor.org.

Sincerely,



Robert Budd
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