



July 14, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Chair
U.S. Senate Finance Committee
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chair
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2107 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senate Democratic Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
U.S. House Republican Leader
468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Finance Committee
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2185 House Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senate Majority McConnell, Democratic Leader Schumer, House Speaker Pelosi and House Republican Leader McCarthy, and Committee Leaders Grassley, Wyden, Pallone and Walden:

On behalf of the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), I write to ask you to prioritize increased funding during the pandemic for Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) as you negotiate the fourth COVID-19 relief bill. These vital, yet underfunded and understaffed disability programs are facing client and staff deaths, client and staff illness, program closures and continued challenges in meeting increased demand as the pandemic endures. They direly need your support to keep people with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) and frontline staff healthy and safe.

ANCOR is a national, nonprofit trade association representing more than 1,600 private community providers of services to people with disabilities. Combined, we support over one million individuals with disabilities, and work to shape policy, share solutions and strengthen the community. The Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who deliver these supports are frontline health care staff who are key to keeping individuals with I/DD healthy in the community instead of in already overwhelmed hospitals, emergency rooms, and nursing homes. Since the pandemic has started, we have focused on ensuring the well-being and survival of individuals with I/DD and the staff supporting them.

Medicaid-funded HCBS supports are very multi-faceted and play a critical part in the lives of individuals with disabilities – from helping people with tasks that do not allow for social distancing (e.g. daily hygiene, grocery shopping), to finding employment and safely socializing. These services are at risk of program closure, decreased service offerings, and negatively impacted quality and compliance if they do not receive dedicated funding during the pandemic. That is because more general Medicaid funding is not guaranteed to be

allocated to the HCBS system as states juggle multiple funding demands. While we fully appreciate the importance of preserving hospitals during the outbreak, if community supports are not also stabilized during this time, we risk losing further ground against the virus as it resurges this summer. The *Disability and Health Journal* [found](#) people with I/DD are more likely to die of the virus, so the importance of staunching the pandemic in this community cannot be overstated. Additionally, if employment and day services do not receive financial relief when their doors are temporarily closed to comply with social distancing, those closures will become permanent. This will leave people with disabilities devoid of key supports to live independent lives and participate in the community after the pandemic.

In fact, when ANCOR [surveyed](#) our members on the effect the pandemic had on their ability to support people with I/DD, 32 percent of respondents shared they had to close at least one line of service because they could not meet the increased costs from staff overtime. This is in addition to continued challenges finding and getting reimbursed for personal protective equipment (PPE). While funding from the CARES Act for the Paycheck Protection Program and Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund helped reduce the devastation the virus has wrought in the disability community, these programs cannot substitute for pandemic funding dedicated to Medicaid intellectual / developmental disability (I/DD) programs.

We strongly urge you to take these considerations to heart as the House and Senate negotiate to find middle ground for the fourth COVID-19 package. Specifically, we request that you keep provisions in the HEROES Act (Section 30103) that would directly increase funding for Medicaid HCBS programs. Please contact me for more information at smeek@ancor.org. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have on next steps for disability supports. ANCOR looks forward to working with you to ensure that the disability service system remains strong so that people with I/DD can continue to live full lives in the community.

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

Cc: All Members of Congress