



April 17, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

As national advocacy organizations speaking for Home and Community Based (HCBS) disability service providers and the people with disabilities they serve, we write to you with some urgency regarding the remaining \$70 billion allocated to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the CARES Act. We want to thank you for the speed with which your Department has been working to support organizations throughout this national emergency. We have one more request.

Medicaid-funded disability service providers who support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and Autism are in particularly dire straits. For more than half a century, they have been the backbone of the disability service delivery system and have consistently delivered high-quality services even in the toughest times. This national emergency, however, is like no other, and many providers are now at risk of closing due to the extraordinary costs of providing services. They have taken on a significant share of the financial burden of continuing to provide long-term care for individuals with disabilities in personal residences, family homes, group homes, intermediate care facilities, and other settings. In keeping with their mission, disability service providers are going to extraordinary lengths – at considerable expense – to protect the people they serve.

To offset the risk of disability service providers being forced to close as a result of the financial burden of the Coronavirus, we respectfully ask that your Department specifically include providers of long-term care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and Autism in the second disbursement of CARES Act funds. In order to expedite getting funds to

the providers that need it most, this disbursement should be in the form of direct payments to providers equal to 6.2% of a provider's 2019 Medicaid revenue, with enhanced funds going to disability service providers in the hardest hit States. These payments should not be construed as loans and should pass directly to the providers through the existing Medicaid system. We estimate that 6.2% of the providers' 2019 Medicaid revenue will equal approximately \$8.3 billion, an amount that is consistent with a recent projection made by The President's Council on Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (PCPID). We ask that an additional \$3.7 billion be allocated for providers in New York, New Jersey, Louisiana, California, Florida, and other States that your Department recognizes as being particularly hard hit.

For several years, our country has been at a crisis level with respect to disability service providers being able to hire and retain direct support professionals and provide services to a growing number of people with disabilities in need. Many providers have not been able to accommodate all the people with disabilities who seek help. That crisis has been exacerbated by the Coronavirus pandemic and puts disability service providers at even greater risk of being forced to close. We ask that funds be disbursed and sent directly to providers as quickly as possible.

As national advocates for disability service providers, we would welcome the opportunity to work with the Department, when the immediate emergency is over, to formulate long-term strategies that will benefit disability service providers, the direct support professionals they hire, and the people they serve.

Thank you for your consideration. We are available to talk with you about this request. Please feel free to reach out to anyone of us.

Sincerely yours,

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