



June 18, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

We write to you to express our concern over the federal government's response to protect people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

We represent groups fighting for the inclusion and equitable treatment of people with I/DD and their families and the trained professionals who support them. Individuals with I/DD are at heightened risk during this global pandemic, and it is critical that they and the people who care for them are protected. This is a matter of human rights and we urge and appreciate your immediate attention and action.

Because people with I/DD often have other medical challenges, they are at greater risk if they or someone they have close contact with tests positive for COVID-19. Many people with I/DD live in group homes and rely daily on caregivers who provide support to them around-the-clock, all-year-round. This means social distancing and quarantine measures may not be just inconvenient for people with I/DD but restrict their ability to carry out daily self-care functions. If a caregiver falls ill or chooses not to come to work to limit their COVID-19 exposure risk, there is nowhere else for these individuals to go and few caretakers with the skill set to provide the right support. This is an issue of equity for people with I/DD. Federal funding will help ensure their continuity of care.

The support and services that people with I/DD need to live in their homes and communities are funded, almost exclusively, through Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS). When states face budget crises and other stressors, they often respond by cutting Medicaid benefits, eligibility, or payments to providers. We appreciate that Congress included added protections to eligibility and coverage for beneficiaries as part of the 6.2% FMAP increase in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, **we**

**strongly believe that Congress must also protect beneficiaries against cuts to reimbursement rates for critical services.**

**We urge you to support provider protections and the dedicated 10 percent FMAP increase for HCBS providers and the increase in the global FMAP included in the HEROES Act.** Both are essential to provide stability to the Medicaid program for people with I/DD and are urgently needed as none of the funding that has flowed from the prior relief packages have supported these systems.

Adequate funding from Congress is needed now more than ever. **The proposed 10 percent FMAP increase to HCBS providers would support people with I/DD and ensure the workforce that provides the services to meet their needs have access to personal protective equipment (PPE), hazard pay, and free testing. PPE will reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure for people with I/DD, their caregivers, and their caregivers' families. Congressional funding for "hazard pay" during this global pandemic will make sure people with I/DD have continued support by trained professionals. And access to free testing for both people with I/DD and caregivers will further help stop the spread of this virus. Free testing will make it easier for people who are most vulnerable to find out whether they've contracted the virus and seek appropriate medical care. Without all these resources, the health and independence of individuals with I/DD will be jeopardized.**

With the establishment of the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund, The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) also plays a leading role in safeguarding the equitable treatment of people with I/DD by providing resources for all Medicaid providers equal to their Medicare counterparts. Congressional oversight of the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund must include ensuring equitable funding is disbursed to HCBS providers.

As this national health emergency continues, we urge Congress and HHS not to overlook people with I/DD and their caregivers. The risk of inaction is too high. Thank you for your continued leadership and attention to this very important issue impacting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Sincerely,

**Anthony K. Shriver**  
*Founder & Chairman*  
Best Buddies

**Jeanne M Farr, MA**  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
NADD

**Gerry Morrissey**  
*Chief Quality Officer*  
The MENTOR Network  
Former State DD Director for  
Massachusetts  
Former President, NASDDDS

**Nicole Jorwic**  
*Senior Director of Public Policy*  
The Arc of the United States

**Kim Musheno**  
*Vice President of Public Policy*  
Autism Society of America

**John Dickerson**  
*President*  
Quillo

**Sarah Meek**  
*Senior Director of Legislative Affairs*  
American Network of Community  
Options and Resources

**Kate McSweeney**  
*Vice President Government Affairs  
& General Counsel*  
ACCSES – The Voice of Disability  
Service Providers

**Nancy Thaler**  
*Former Deputy Secretary of  
Developmental Programs,  
Pennsylvania*  
Former Executive Director, NASDDDS

**Joseph M. Macbeth**  
*Chief Executive Officer / President*  
National Alliance for  
Direct Support Professionals, Inc.  
Albany, NY

**Steven M. Eidelman**  
*H. Rodney Sharp Professor of*  
*Human Services Policy and*  
*Leadership Faculty Director*  
The National Leadership Consortium  
on Developmental Disabilities

**Alixé Bonardi**  
*Director IDD, HSRI*

**Valerie Bradley**  
*President Emerita, HSRI*

**David Hughes**  
*President, HSRI*

**Jordan Lindsey**  
*Executive Director*  
The Arc California

**Leo V. Sarkissian,**  
*Executive Director*  
The Arc of Massachusetts  
217 South Street