



May 17, 2021

The Honorable Martin J. Walsh
Secretary
Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Walsh:

On behalf of the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), I would like to congratulate you on your confirmation as Secretary of the Department of Labor (DOL). This pandemic has been particularly difficult for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and the service providers who support them. To ensure that these programs can come back stronger to meet increased demand after the pandemic, we encourage you to adopt policies that recognize that systems designed to deliver care are essential to foster a strong economy and enable individuals with I/DD to live independent lives and fully participate in their community.

ANCOR is a national, nonprofit trade association representing more than 1,600 private community providers of services to people with I/DD). Combined, we employ more than a half-million professionals to support over one million individuals with I/DD. We work to shape policy, share solutions and strengthen community so that everyone, regardless of their disability, can be included in society. The supports our members deliver help people with disabilities have full lives while staying healthy and safe, particularly during the pandemic. These supports are mainly delivered by direct support professionals (DSPs) who assist with essential tasks such as grocery shopping, daily hygiene, finding employment, maintaining relationships with family and friends, and making informed health decisions.

Create a Standard Occupational Classification for DSPs

DSPs need a federal designation specific to the occupation to recognize the profession and inform policymaking. We ask that you direct the Bureau of Labor Statistics to create this designation as proposed by Sens. Hassan, Collins, Casey, Ernst, and Gillibrand in [S. 1437](#).

Establish a commission on DSP workforce development

We encourage you to create a DSP workforce commission. This commission should develop and champion DSP career ladders, oversee grant development and opportunities for DSPs, worker groups, consumers and providers, and link to the regional workforce development boards.

Issue a joint Training & Employment Guidance Letter

To further strengthen the DSP workforce, we ask that the Employment and Training Administration issue guidance to state workforce investment systems on how local workforce boards can support investments in DSP training as a part of a high growth industry and transition workers from congregate settings to more individualized settings through the adult dislocated workers program.

Incentivize career ladders and lattices for DSPs

We urge you to incentivize employers and other bodies to offer DSPs career development programs, scholarship opportunities, subsidize career development training, and partner with local colleges. Programs should be funded and developed to provide opportunities for DSPs to grow in their current profession aside from climbing the direct care ladder.

Formalize communications between DOL and the Department of Health & Human Services

Since most disability service providers are primarily Medicaid-funded, we strongly encourage you to establish formal processes and communications channels between DOL and HHS. This would ensure that providers can comply with new labor regulations that result in increased costs and interdepartmental outreach on apprenticeships and other programs.

Thank you for your attention to these critical issues. ANCOR members across the country stand ready to work with you and the whole Administration to improve the Medicaid-funded disability service system and better support individuals with I/DD, their loved ones, and their DSPs. Please feel free to contact me at smeek@ancor.org should you have any questions or would like to discuss further.

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