



May 12, 2021

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator
425 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Klobuchar:

On behalf of the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), I write to express our support for the WORKS Now Act (S. 574). The grants this legislation proposes could help our members recover from significant overtime and personal protective equipment costs incurred as their organizations supported people with disabilities during the pandemic.

ANCOR is a national, nonprofit trade association representing more than 1,600 private community providers of services to people with disabilities, mostly funded by the Medicaid program. Combined, we support over one million individuals with disabilities, and work to share policy, shape solutions and strengthen the community. The direct support professionals (DSPs) our members employ are on the frontlines of the pandemic, keeping people with disabilities healthy and safe in the community. They help people with disabilities find employment, perform daily hygiene, go grocery shopping, and make healthy decisions. They often have little ability to physically distance due to the intimate nature of the work, making PPE particularly essential in this field.

The WORKS Now Act would make our members eligible for additional support as they continue to cover wage and equipment expenses they largely did not budget for prior to the pandemic. These expenses are in addition to significant loss of revenue from having to close lines of service either because of social distancing requirements or high DSP turnover. Disability supports are faced with a crippling workforce crisis which leads to a national turnover rate of nearly 43 percent. This crisis has numerous causes but states setting low Medicaid reimbursement rates, which lead to low wages and limited benefits, are a primary cause. This crisis was further compounded by DSPs' concerns for their own safety and their family obligations during the pandemic. Ultimately, low retention and recruitment leads to disruptions in essential supports for people with disabilities. Any financial support going towards wages, such as that offered by the WORKS Now Act, could help curb the workforce crisis and stabilize essential disability supports.

We support this grants initiative for the non-profit sector. However, because the on-going pandemic has laid bare systemic and decades-long underinvestment in Medicaid programs, it behooves us to urge you to also support longer-term funding solutions to the issues laid out above. After the pandemic, Medicaid programs will need significant investments to meet increased demand from people with disabilities yearning to rejoin mainstream society. We hope that in addition to the WORKS Now Act, you will support provisions for long-term funding for Medicaid supports in future bipartisan legislative packages.

We appreciate your efforts to address challenges facing employers during the pandemic. Please feel free to reach out to me at smeek@ancor.org if you have any questions.

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