

LETTER TEXT:

April X, 2017

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you prepare the Fiscal Year 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we respectfully request a funding level of \$76,000,000 for the State and Territorial Councils on Developmental Disabilities (DD Councils), \$42,000,000 for the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities (PADD) program, and \$40,000,000 for the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). The three programs were created under the Developmental Disabilities and Bill of Rights Assistance Act of 2000, and are located in every state and territory.

The current levels of funding for the DD Councils, P&As and UCEDDs have not kept pace with inflation. Persons with developmental disabilities are living longer lives as a result of better diagnosis and treatment, and new issues around aging and caregiving must be met by the three programs. There is also an increasing demand for services to address existing issues for the disability community, such as barriers to education and employment that prevent persons with developmental disabilities from becoming economically self-sufficient taxpayers. Each program is actively working to implement numerous federal statutes that have been passed in a bi-partisan manner in recent years including the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Achieving Better Life Experience Act, and the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Given the workforce participation rate of individuals with developmental disabilities is less than half that of the general population, it is even more critical that DD Councils, UCEDDs, and P&As have adequate funding to drive programs and policies that move people with developmental disabilities into competitive, integrated employment. These opportunities benefit both individuals with developmental disabilities, and greater society.

DD Councils utilize federal funding to support model demonstration grant projects that have increased access for inclusive education, housing, transportation, employment, and secondary transition services for persons with developmental disabilities and their families. DD Councils have worked to ensure access to services and supports, community inclusion, and self-sufficiency by advancing innovative policy and programs that benefit persons with developmental disabilities, their families, and communities. The request for \$76,000,000 for the Councils is based on language in the authorizing statute. If appropriated at this level, more projects can be funded through the Projects of National Significance program, which supports the research on pressing issues affecting people with developmental disabilities and fosters the development of policies to promote productivity, inclusion, and integration.

P&A agencies utilize PADD funding to ensure that children and adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities are free from abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. PADD's efforts also emphasize critical supports and services, including education, employment, housing, and transportation, that make community living a long term reality. With 57 P&A agencies that advocate on behalf of persons with disabilities in every state, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories, the P&A System is the largest provider of legally-based advocacy services for people with disabilities in the United States.

UCEDDs provide interdisciplinary pre-service preparation of students and fellows, continuing education, community training, research, model services, technical assistance, and information dissemination. UCEDDs exist to provide a unique, expert state and community resource to facilitate the independence and full participation in the community of people living with developmental and other disabilities. Centers are housed in a university and translate the best scientifically validated practices into broad-based, high quality, community practices.

Despite fiscal constraints over the past decade, DD Councils, P&As, and UCEDDs continue to engage in creating positive changes in communities. Assuring funding levels for FY 2018 will help to make certain that UCEDDs, P&As, and DD Councils continue to successfully promote equality of opportunity and inclusion of persons with developmental disabilities across the lifespan in all aspects of community life.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your continued attention to these important national priorities.

Sincerely,