

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 6, 2020

Dear Disability Advocates and Allies:

Thank you for your efforts to ensure Congress included important disability policy in the responses to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Now, we must work to achieve one of our most important goals: *increasing the resources necessary to stabilize and expand home and community-based services (HCBS) during this crisis.*

During this almost unprecedented public health emergency, continuing and strengthening HCBS is critical to reducing the likelihood of spreading the virus and is essential for supporting people with disabilities.

We invite you to join us in advocating for more funding and support for HCBS in any future Congressional package to address COVID-19 by sharing your stories, photos and videos about what HCBS means to people with disabilities and the direct support professionals and personal care attendants who support them.

To have your members and allies share what HCBS means, please send stories to Casey_SeniorSpotlight@aging.senate.gov by April 10th. You can also share your story, photo or video on Twitter with the hashtag #WhatWeNeed and tag @DemsonAging.

Your voices are critical to the policy debate and help us determine what the most pressing needs are for people with disabilities, their families and those who support them. Thanks to your advocacy, we were successful in obtaining a number of significant priorities that will help the disability community in the three pieces of COVID-19 related legislation that have been signed into law over the past month, including:

- Ensuring Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance recipients will receive the COVID-19 relief rebates;
- Securing \$85 million for Centers for Independent Living and \$50 million to support people with disabilities and older adults during the public health crisis;
- Temporarily increasing Medicaid FMAP to 6.2 percent;
- Extending the funding for the Money Follows the Person program and the Spousal Impoverishment protections until November 30, 2020;
- Making it possible for non-profits, such as direct service provider agencies, to apply for and receive Small Business Administration loans;

- \$30 billion was added to the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Fund, which can be used for special education, related services and 504 plans for students with disabilities; and
- Preventing the administration from including a change in the law that would have allowed the Secretary of Education to waive requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

While these accomplishments will help many people, our work is far from complete. This public health crisis calls for unprecedented levels of engagement to ensure people with disabilities can continue to receive the services they need.

Thank you in advance for continuing to be partners to advocate for additional funds and services for HCBS. You can help us fight for these important resources by sharing your story about what HCBS mean to you during the COVID-19 crisis and sending an email to Casey_SeniorSpotlight@aging.senate.gov, or by contacting your Senators and Representatives to support the policies in our legislation, S. 3544, *the Coronavirus Relief for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act*.

With your help we can achieve the goal of ensuring home and community-based services are available for all who need it.

Sincerely,

/s/
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator