

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 1, 2018

The Honorable Lance Robertson  
Administrator and Assistant Secretary for Aging  
Administration for Community Living  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
Washington, District of Columbia 20024

Dear Administrator Robertson:

With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) almost 28 years ago, the disability community, family members and their advocates entered the mainstream society. An important aspect of full participation in society is advising and driving the development of research and policy. To that end, I urge you to convene meetings of three key federal advisory committees and councils at the Administration for Community Living. These committees and councils are designed to advise the government on how best to advance disability policy and research for the country: The President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities (PCPID), The National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) Advisory Committee and the Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR).

From my understanding, the Trump Administration has deviated from the practice of past Administrations and failed to convene these advisory groups on a regular basis. I am concerned that the voices of people with disabilities are being stifled when it comes to setting priorities and advising on programs. With the ADA, today more than 50 million Americans living with a disability are able to shop where they wish, attend a movie or eat a meal in a restaurant with the expectation that they will be treated like any person without a disability. That progress is strengthened by the committees and councils listed above, as well as groups such as the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee and the Department of Labor Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities. Federal agencies depend upon these committees and councils for input from persons with disabilities, family members, and advocates to guide their work.

The PCPID, established by President Lyndon Johnson in 1966, serves as an advisory committee to the President on policies that support the advancement and protection of Americans with intellectual disabilities. The NIDILRR Advisory Committee is largely comprised of non-federal officials and ensures that the federal government's primary disability research agency achieves its mission to generate knowledge that improves the ability of individuals with disabilities to live as full members of their communities. Lastly, the ICDR is comprised of federal government officials who work to coordinate among federal departments and agencies conducting disability, independent living and rehabilitation research programs on behalf of Americans with disabilities.

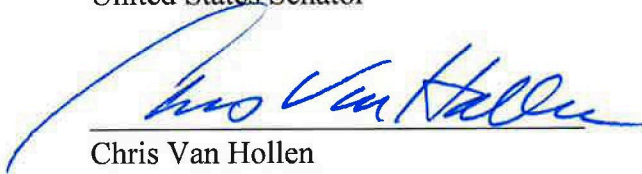
Each of these groups provide unique and valuable knowledge and experience to the federal government and ensure the priorities and concerns of the disability community are heard. For example, recent annual reports of the PCPID provided important guidance for policy development in the areas of disability employment, assistive technology and the direct service workforce. Unfortunately, the PCPID, the NIDILRR Advisory Committee and the ICDR were largely ignored in 2017.

In order to realize the goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act and ensure that people with disabilities are full participants in our society, they must be represented in the workings of the federal government. We urge you to convene these committees and councils in order to provide people with disabilities with a voice in the programs and policies that directly affect them and we urge you to continue the convening of these groups on a regular basis.

Sincerely,



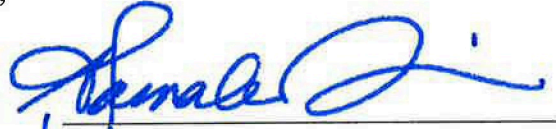
Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



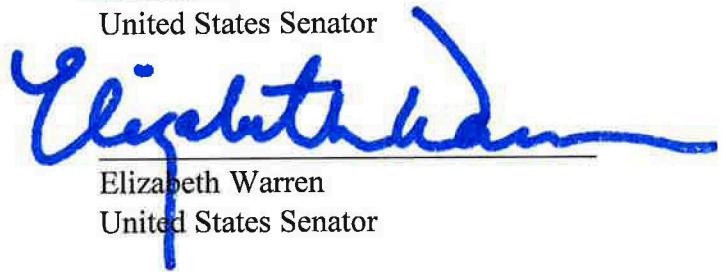
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator