

## Press Statement

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### **Congress Passes ABLE Act**

#### **Bill Promotes Economic Self-Sufficiency for People with Disabilities**

WASHINGTON, DC (December 17, 2014) — The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) applauds the House and Senate for passing the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act. The Senate passed the bill last night on an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 76-16. The House passed the bill on December 3 on a similarly bipartisan vote of 404 to 17. The President is expected to sign the bill into law soon.

“The bipartisan votes for the ABLE Act, coupled with similar votes for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), are a good reminder that Republicans and Democrats in Congress want to see improvements in policy and practice that will result in more Americans realizing the vision of the Americans with Disabilities Act and become full participants in the lives of their communities,” said Andrew J. Imparato, AUCD Executive Director. “We look forward to working with bipartisan leaders in the next Congress to build on these two legislative milestones and to continue to expand opportunities for people with significant disabilities to obtain a quality education, have a fulfilling career, and move into the middle class,” Imparato continued.

Currently, individuals with disabilities who depend on federal health or income benefits (such as Medicaid or SSI) are not permitted to have more than \$2,000 in cash savings or assets, which essentially, forces individuals to remain poor and unable to save money for emergencies or investments in the future. Much like existing “529” college savings plans, the ABLE Act will allow individuals and families of children with disabilities to save money for many disability related expenses such as education, transportation, or employment without jeopardizing important health or income supports.

However, more can and should be done to ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as those without disabilities. With the coming anniversaries of the ADA and IDEA in 2015, AUCD looks forward to working with the new 114<sup>th</sup> Congress to build on these two most recent bipartisan accomplishments and continue to expand opportunities and improve the quality of life of people with disabilities and their families.

AUCD urges Congress to begin these reforms by passing AGE-IN Act to improve transition outcomes, reauthorizing the Higher Education Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act with more focus on training teachers and supporting students, raising resource and asset limits in

income security programs, and making Social Security work incentives more effective and user-friendly. AUCD is ready to provide the evidence-based knowledge to assist policymakers as they make these and other important reforms.

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) represents over 120 University Centers nationwide that conduct basic and applied research, develop evidence-based supports and best practices, train professionals that support people with disabilities, build leaders, and provide technical assistance to communities, providers and the public. The members of AUCD represent every U.S. state and territory. For more information and a directory of member Centers, visit AUCD's website: [www.aucd.org](http://www.aucd.org).