June 11, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman, Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
Washington, DC

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
Washington, DC

Dear Senators Harkin and Moran:

We thank you for your consistent efforts to provide funding for the model comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) programs. Again we ask you to include $12,718,000 for the TPSID programs in the FY 2015 Senate Appropriations bill.

The reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 2008 made an historic commitment to students with intellectual disabilities by establishing new provisions that provided additional access to post-secondary education. One of the most critical provisions made a landmark investment to students with intellectual disabilities by establishing the TPSID programs and National Coordinating Center (NCC).

Since the grant award, the TPSID funding has supported the creation or expansion of programs at 45 colleges and universities serving 1,379 students. These models focus on academic enrichment, socialization, independent living, and employment in order to create, expand or enhance high-quality, inclusive higher education experiences to support positive outcomes for individuals with intellectual disabilities, including paid employment. The comprehensive evaluation system developed by the NCC found that, in just three years, 70% of participating students were involved in career development activities and paid internships. An additional 36% of students held 424 paid jobs, of which 89% paid minimum wage or higher, and some students held two or three jobs while they were going to college. During year two, 42% of employed students had never held a paid job prior to entering the TPSID program. Therefore, the employment rate for students in the TPSID program is double the rate of other transitioning youth. These programs demonstrate that people with I/DD can and will benefit from higher education (Grigal, Hart, & Smith, 2014).

Great strides towards postsecondary education, life in the community and employment are being made through the TPSID programs. However, there are still far too few options available in our country and further model development is needed to build on this success. It is essential that the TPSID programs and NCC be continued at the current funding level. As you consider FY 2015 priorities, the undersigned national coalitions, national organizations and institutions of higher education strongly urge your support for continued funding.

Sincerely,

ACCSES

Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)

Autism National Committee

Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)

Bergen Community College
Dr. B. Kaye Walter, President

Brookhaven College
Dr. Thom Chesney, President

Brain Injury Association of America

Camden County College,
Dr. Raymond Yannuzzi, President

Collaboration to Promote Self Determination (CPSD)

Community College Consortium on Autism and Intellectual Disabilities (CCCAID)

Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, Inc. (COPPA)

Easter Seals

College Steps Program

Highline Community College,
Dr. Jack Bermingham, President

Higher Education Consortium for Special Education

Institute for Educational Leadership

Lewis and Clark Community College
Dr. Dale Chapman, President

National Association of School Psychologists

National Association of State Directors of Special Education

National Center on Learning Disabilities

National Down Syndrome Congress

National Down Syndrome Society

National Organization of Nurses with Disabilities

Physician Parent Caregivers

Rockland Community College
Dr. Cliff Wood, President

Taft Community College
Dr. Dena Maloney, Superintendent-President

TASH

Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children

The Arc of the United States

The Advocacy Institute

Tourette Syndrome Association

United Cerebral Palsy

CC: The Honorable Patty Murray, The Honorable Patrick Leahy, The Honorable Mary L. Landrieu, The Honorable Richard J. Durbin, The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, The Honorable Tim Johnson, The Honorable Tom Udall, The Honorable Mark Begich, The Honorable Chris Coons, The Honorable Jack Reed, The Honorable Mark Pryor, The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, The Honorable Jon Tester, The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen, The Honorable Jeff Merkley, The Honorable Thad Cochran, The Honorable Mitch McConnell, The Honorable Susan Collins, The Honorable Dan Coats, The Honorable Roy Blunt, The Honorable John Hoeven, The Honorable Richard C. Shelby, The Honorable Lamar Alexander, The Honorable Lindsey Graham, The Honorable Mark Kirk, The Honroable Mike Johanns, The Honorable John Boozman