

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 24, 2016

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, District of Columbia 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, District of Columbia 20510

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you prepare the Fiscal Year 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we respectfully urge adequate funding for State and Territorial Councils on Developmental Disabilities (DD Councils), the Protection and Advocacy (P&A) System, and the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), which carry out essential programs in every state and territory. Specifically, we request funding levels of \$76 million for the DD Councils, \$42 million for the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities (PADD) program run by P&A agencies, and \$40 million for the UCEDDs.

The current levels of funding for the DD Councils, UCEDDs, and P&As have not kept pace with inflation. With better diagnosis and treatment, persons with developmental disabilities are living longer lives, and new issues around aging and caregiving must be met. All three programs are experiencing increasing demand for services to address existing issues for persons with developmental disabilities, such as barriers to employment and impediments to full community participation. Each program is actively working to implement numerous federal statutes, which have been passed in a bi-partisan manner in recent years, like the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Achieving Better Life Experience Act, and the Every Student Succeeds Act.

With the workforce participation rate of individuals with developmental disabilities at approximately one-third of the general population, it is even more critical that DD Councils, UCEDDs, and P&As have adequate funding to help create and support programs and policies that move people with developmental disabilities into competitive, integrated employment, which benefits both individuals with developmental disabilities, and greater society.

DD Councils utilize federal funding to support model demonstration grant projects that have increased access to inclusive education, housing, transportation, employment, and secondary transition services for persons with developmental disabilities and their families. DD Councils have worked to ensure that people with developmental disabilities have access to services and supports, are fully included in their communities, and are able to become economically self-sufficient by advancing innovative policy and programs that benefit persons with developmental disabilities, their families, and communities. The \$76 million request 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 of people with developmental disabilities.

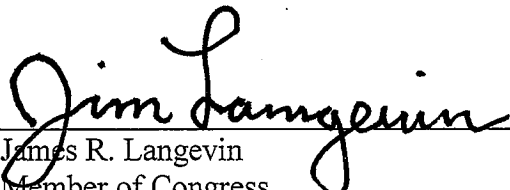
P&A agencies utilize PADD funding to ensure that children and adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities who live in all settings are free from abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. PADD's efforts also emphasize critical supports and services, including education, employment, housing, 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.

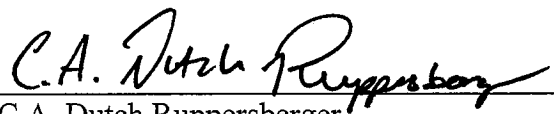
UCEDDs provide interdisciplinary pre-service preparation of students and fellows, continuing education, community training, research, model services, technical assistance, and information dissemination. UCEDDs exist to provide a unique, expert state and community resource to facilitate the independence and full participation in the community of people of all ages living with developmental and other disabilities. Each Center is housed in a university, but by mandate must translate the best scientifically validated practices into broad-based, high quality, community practices. Center activities provide a real return on the investment of the Congress and the federal government in the network by creating new knowledge and translating that knowledge into practice.


Despite fiscal constraints over the past decade, DD Councils, P&As, and UCEDDs continue to engage in creating positive systems change in communities. Assuring these levels of funding in FY 2017 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.

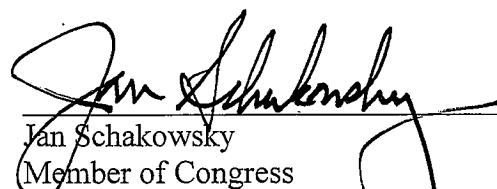
Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your continued attention to these important national priorities.

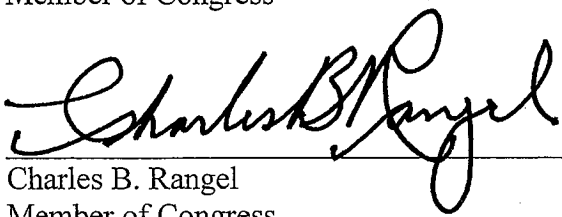
Sincerely,

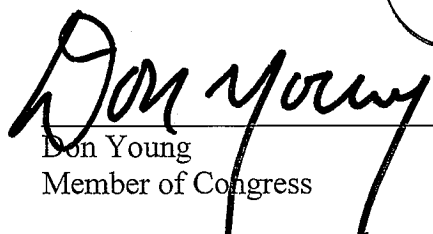

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