Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

We write to support the State and Territorial Councils on Developmental Disabilities (DD Councils), the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs), the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities (PADD) program, and the Developmental Disabilities Projects of National Significance (PNS) funding. We respectfully request $89,000,000 for the DD Councils, $47,173,000 for the UCEDDs, $59,659,000 for the PADD program, and $24,600,000 for PNS.

The current levels of funding for the DD Councils, UCEDDs, PADD program, and Projects of National Significance have not kept pace with inflation or need. These programs, authorized under the Developmental Disabilities and Bill of Rights Assistance Act of 2000, are experiencing increased demand from persons with developmental disabilities and their families for supports and services. With the labor force participation rate of individuals with developmental disabilities at approximately one-third that of the general population, it is critical these programs receive robust funding.

DD Councils utilize federal funding to support demonstration projects that increase access to inclusive education, housing, transportation, employment, and secondary transition services for persons with developmental disabilities and their families. The request for $89,000,000 for the Councils would provide state councils with an increase to identify and address the most pressing needs of people with developmental disabilities in their states.

Protection and Advocacy Systems (P&As) utilize PADD funding to provide direct services to ensure that children and adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities are free from abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. PADD's efforts also connect children and adults with IDD to critical supports and services, including education, employment, housing, and transportation that make community living a long-term reality. P&As advocate on behalf of persons with disabilities and are the largest provider of legally based advocacy services for people with disabilities in the United States. With 57 agencies, there is one in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, each U.S. territory, and a 57th in the Four Corners region serving the Hopi, Navajo, and San Juan Southern Paiute nations. At the local and state level,
PADD’s fight for the rights of people with disabilities, including ending discriminatory medical rationing practices in several states and equal access to testing, vaccines, and treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic, has grown increasingly demanding. An increase in PADD funding to $59.659 million is needed to address these new and developing issues while maintaining the other important work that the P&As do through the PADD program for people with developmental disabilities.

The UCEDDs are interdisciplinary education, research, and public service centers based at universities that provide training, technical assistance, service, research, and information sharing to people with disabilities, their families, state and local government agencies, and providers with a focus on building the capacity of communities and creating improvements in the service delivery system for people with I/DD in the United States. In FY 2021, the number of requests for technical assistance to UCEDDs increased by 44% and the number of technical assistance products developed for the UCEDDs increased by 83%. These increases are a direct result of the impact of COVID-19 on the systems supporting people with disabilities and are not sustainable without addition assistance. As regulatory and service systems continue to evolve once the public health emergency expires, the support needs of the UCEDD constituents will not decline. The increased funding will enable the UCEDDs to fund a new round of competitive grants focused on increasing diversity, equity and inclusion by partnering with minority-serving institutions and will also support other UCEDD activities and programs to promote opportunities for people with I/DD to exercise self-determination, be independent, and be included in all aspects of community life.

The PNS invest in innovative demonstration projects, including collecting and analyzing longitudinal data to monitor the progress on important policy priorities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) including where they live, where they work, the wages they earn, and the costs and outcomes of services and supports. The PNS have contributed to the development of evidence-based practices and improved federal and state policies that support people with I/DD to lead quality, inclusive lives in their communities and avoid costlier services in segregated settings and institutions.

Through PNS, the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities provides technical assistance, disseminates research, and shares best practices on how to serve those with disabilities. They also help policymakers improve policies and services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and inform policymakers of critical emerging needs.

Despite fiscal constraints over the past decade, DD Councils, PADD advocates, UCEDDs, and the PNS have brought about positive changes in their communities. Assuring robust funding in FY2023 will help to make certain that these programs continue to promote equality of opportunity and inclusion of persons with disabilities across their 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,

Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

Jack Reed  
United States Senator

Brian Schatz  
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator
Jon Tester
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator