



Disabled People Left Behind and Excluded from COVID-19 Relief

The American Association of People with Disabilities' Statement on Coronavirus Relief Bill

After months of delays and months of coordinated advocacy from the disability community, this week Congress passed another coronavirus relief bill which does not address critical needs of disabled people, our families, and our service providers. Our community is hurting. Our community is dying. More than 40% of the nation's coronavirus related deaths have been people with disabilities in congregate settings, and yet the recent COVID-19 relief bill provides no dedicated funding to support people with disabilities living in their homes and prevent further admissions to congregate settings. The bill also did not provide funding to get disabled people out of dangerous congregate settings where the spread of COVID-19 has been so deadly.

While disabled people grieve the loss of our community due to this virus, we are also struggling to access much needed supports and programs. The COVID-19 relief bill also failed to provide funding for personal protective equipment for paid and unpaid direct support workers, who have provided essential services throughout this pandemic.

We applaud the dedicated support that Congress provided to increase broadband access and provide pandemic-related assistance to families for broadband. People with disabilities experience a significant digital divide, and these dollars will help keep people connected during a time of isolation. Congress did authorize some small stimulus payments, but these payments exclude adult dependents, which means that families of people with disabilities and multi-generational families will not receive adequate equitable relief. The bill included funding for health care providers and for mental health services, some of which could be used for people with disabilities, but these provisions do not say anything about ensuring that people with disabilities can transition out of or be diverted from congregate settings, and there is no guarantee that any funds will be used for this purpose. The extended increases for unemployment, rent, and SNAP assistance, as well as



the support for transportation entities and the extension of the eviction moratorium until January 31, 2021 are necessary and should not have taken Congress months to agree upon, leaving millions uncertain of where they would live, how they would eat, how they would afford to care for themselves and their families, and how they themselves would get the care they need.

The significant delay of this COVID-19 relief package is a direct failure of our leaders in Congress to prioritize the American people. We are outraged at the way in which our representatives and leaders in Congress have failed to support the health and well-being of people with disabilities, and Americans at large. This pandemic and its far-reaching economic impacts are far from over, and the new Congress must take immediate action in January to secure increased funding of home and community based services, paid family leave, funding to support local, Tribal, and state governments, financial aid for back-paying rent and avoiding eviction, extensions of increased unemployment assistance, and more.

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The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) is a convener, connector, and catalyst for change, increasing the political and economic power of people with disabilities. As a national cross-disability rights organization, AAPD advocates for full civil rights for the over 56 million Americans with disabilities by promoting equal opportunity, economic power, independent living, and political participation. To learn more, visit the AAPD Web site: www.aapd.com.