



Commemorating 40 Years Of Disability Advocacy 1973-2013

May 21, 2013

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Moran:

On behalf of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Technology and Telecommunications Task Force, the undersigned organizations are writing to request that the Senate FY2014 Labor, Health and Human Services (LHHS) Appropriations Subcommittee provide \$37.5 million for the Assistive Technology (AT) Act. This increased funding, which provides \$31 million for State AT Programs, \$5.5 million for the Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology (PAAT) program along with \$1 million for Technical Assistance, allows the full range of supports intended to be provided for people with disabilities according to the current statute.

This modest \$5 million increase would allow every state and territory to receive at least the minimum grant outlined under the current formula in the AT Act and would directly support the ability of the State AT Programs to provide the breadth of services authorized under the statute including device demonstration, short-term device loan, device reutilization state financing, training, and information and assistance activities. This increased funding for the states would provide help meet the urgent demand for veterans, the growing aging population, and youth with disabilities who have been through secondary and postsecondary education but need technology to assist them in getting and keeping a job. It would also help states promote the adoption of commercial, off-the-shelf, multiple-use technology to support people with all types of disabilities. Since many State AT Programs provide services through subcontractors at the local level using such organizations as Centers for Independent Living and Easter Seals agencies, the reach of this funding increase would delve deep into the communities who serve this population.

Such an increase would also allow Protection and Advocacy agencies through the PAAT program to increase their impact on the lives of children and adults with

disabilities through additional advocacy work. The PAAT program ensures in every state and territory that individuals with disabilities have access to the assistive technology they need to receive a high-quality education and obtain competitive integrated employment. Current funding is used to provide information and referrals, offer individual and systemic advocacy services, and conduct trainings for children and adults with disabilities. Additional funding would allow the PAAT program to serve more eligible individuals, including returning veterans, and allow more individuals with a disability to live in their communities and be economically self-sufficient.

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities is a coalition of more than 100 national disability organizations working together to advocate for national public policy that ensures the self determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society. The Telecommunications and Technology Task Force focuses on ensuring national policy on matters of telecommunications and technology, including assistive technology, helps move society toward our ultimate goal of full inclusion of all people with a disability.

Thank you again for your efforts on behalf of Assistive Technology Act, which is so important to Americans with disabilities. We look forward to working with you in the coming months as Congress works to finalize the FY2014 appropriations process. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact one of the CCD Technology and Telecommunications Task Force Co-Chairs: Eric Buehlmann, eric.buehlmann@ndrn.org; Mark Richert, 4justice@concentric.net; Nell Bailey, NBaily@resna.org; or Audrey Busch, abusch@wpllc.net.

Sincerely,

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs
American Foundation for the Blind
National Disability Rights Network
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Disability Institute
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
The Arc
ACCSES
Autism National Committee
Council for Exceptional Children
American Association of People with Disabilities
Easter Seals
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Perkins School for the Blind
ADHD Aware