



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

May 23, 2012

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Chair
Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison, Ranking Member
Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Mikulski and Hutchison:

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) urge you to fully fund the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) and oppose any efforts to make the response to the survey voluntary. The ACS provides vital economic, social, and housing data on many of our counties, cities, Congressional districts, towns, and communities that are not provided anywhere else. The ACS is particularly critical to the disability community because it was the first reliable measure of disability in the general population.

CCD is a coalition of 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. Since 1973, the CCD has advocated on behalf of people of all ages with disabilities and their families. CCD has worked to achieve federal legislation and regulations that assure that the 62 million children and adults with disabilities are fully integrated into the mainstream of society.

The six question framework used by the ACS provides a model for standardizing the way we collect data on disability in "general purpose" government surveys. The disability questions are now used in the Current Population Survey to provide reliable information on unemployment among people with disabilities and in the National Health Interview Survey to provide information on the health status of people with disabilities and in other national surveys. This data is critical to gathering a clearer picture of the lives of individuals with disabilities and measuring our success at achieving integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in mainstream society.

The ACS data drives federal funding of critical programs and helps assess whether policies are working, or whether they need to be revisited with new approaches and strategies. Our government's policy debates are driven by data and people with disabilities must be appropriately counted by the federal government's statistical agencies in order to be included in these debates. If we take away the foundation of gathering disability data, it will weaken the disability voice in policy making, and ultimately reduce the services and supports available to people with disabilities.

CCD urges you to fully fund the ACS and protect the program from harmful amendments that would reduce its effectiveness. If you have questions or would like additional information please contact Julie Ward (ward@thearc.org)

On Behalf of:

ACCSES

American Association on Health and Disability

American Counseling Association

American Foundation for the Blind

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

American Therapeutic Recreation Association

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs

Autism National Committee

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Brain Injury Association of America

Council for Learning Disabilities

Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund

Easter Seals

Epilepsy Foundation

Everyone Reading

Institute for Educational Leadership

International Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation

Learning Disabilities Association of America

Lutheran Services in America Disability Network

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors

National Association of School Psychologists

National Association of State Head Injury Administrators

National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities

National Center for Learning Disabilities

National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare

National Council on Independent Living

National Disability Rights Network

National Down Syndrome Society
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Rehabilitation Association
National Respite Coalition
Paralyzed Veterans of America
The Advocacy Institute
The Arc of the United States
United Cerebral Palsy
United Spinal Association