



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

May 4, 2015

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

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human  
Services, and Education  
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Technology and Telecommunications Task Force, the undersigned organizations are writing to ask for your support for the inclusion of \$38 million in the FY 2016 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations (LHHS) bill for the Assistive Technology (AT) Act Programs. Funding provided through the AT Act supports programs that assure people with disabilities have access to and acquisition of the assistive technology services they need to live, work, and attend school in their communities.

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.

The AT Act programs provide critical funding for programs that assure people with disabilities can access and acquire the assistive technology services they need to live, work, and attend school in their communities. We appreciate that the FY 2014 budget maintained funding for the AT Act programs but this amount does not meet the demand for these important programs nor does it fully fund the program according to the statute. Fully funding the AT Act at \$38 million would allow the programs to provide the full breadth of services required by the law.

When the Assistive Technology Act was reauthorized by the Congress in 2004, Statewide AT Programs became responsible for providing more services that bring assistive technology directly

into the hands of those who need it. AT Act Programs are required to operate statewide programs that are available for persons with all types of disabilities, all ages, in all environments (education, employment, community living and information technology). State programs are required to provide a continuum of services that increase awareness of and access to assistive technology, including state financing activities (such as financial loans, cooperative buy, funds of last resort, etc.), device reutilization (including recycling, repair, refurbishment and device exchange), device loan/borrowing and device demonstration services. These state level activities are provided in addition to previously required activities including information and assistance, training, technical assistance, and coordination and collaboration. While individuals with disabilities, their families and guardians are the primary beneficiaries of services, the AT Act requires Statewide AT Act Programs to provide a wide range of services and supports to other stakeholders such as educators, employers, health care providers, rehabilitation providers, and technology experts including web designers, procurement officials and AT manufacturers and vendors. While the 2004 amendments to the AT Act have had a positive effect by improving the consistency and availability of a continuum of services nationally, it is unfortunate that the increased requirement to implement seven, rather than four, activities has not been met with the full amount of resources needed to meet the intent of the law.

The Protection and Advocacy (P&A) for Assistive Technology program has been similarly underfunded, with 28 State P&As funded under the program receiving a minimum allotment of just \$50,000. Territories receive \$20,000. Larger states such as Pennsylvania (\$124,700), Georgia (\$96,000), Florida (\$186,500), and Ohio (\$113,000) receive insufficient funding given their large populations. The PAAT program uses these very limited funds to provide protection and advocacy services to children and adults with disabilities. Every P&A program conducts trainings and works with families, medical providers, schools, employers, and communities to ensure that individuals have access to the assistive technology they need. Given the current level of demand experienced by P&A programs -- as well as the heightened demand for the assistive technology needs of returning wounded veterans and an aging population -- fully funding the AT Act is critical.

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 FY2015 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](mailto:eric.buehlmann@ndrn.org); Mark Richert, [4justice@concentric.net](mailto:4justice@concentric.net); Audrey Busch, [audrey.busch@ataporg.org](mailto:audrey.busch@ataporg.org); Sara Rosta, [sara.rosta@PPSV.com](mailto:sara.rosta@PPSV.com); or Michael Brogioli, [mbrogioli@resna.org](mailto:mbrogioli@resna.org).

Sincerely,

American Association on Health and Disability  
American Foundation for the Blind  
American Network of Community Options and Resources  
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association  
Association of Assistive Technology Programs  
ACCSES  
Brain Injury Association of America  
Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation  
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund  
Easter Seals

Institute for Educational Leadership  
Lutheran Services in America Disability Network  
National Association of State Directors of Special Education  
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators  
National Disability Rights Network  
Perkins  
RESNA, Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America  
The Arc  
United Cerebral Palsy  
United Spinal Association