



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

Representative Dan Kildee
203 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

April 30, 2020

Dear Representative Kildee:

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) and allies write to express our support of the Strengthening UI for Coronavirus Impacted Workers and Students Act. The CCD is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society.

People with disabilities live in poverty at more than twice the rate of people without disabilities; while people with disabilities make up approximately 12 percent of the U.S. working-age population, they account for more than half of those living in long-term poverty. More than 65 percent of the 17.9 million working-age adults with disabilities participate in at least one safety net or income support program.¹ People with disabilities also disproportionately hold low-wage (in 2013, 61.2% of working-age adults with disabilities had incomes below 200% of the federal poverty line compared to 28.8% of working-age adults without disabilities)² and part time jobs (32% of people with disabilities versus 17% for people without disabilities worked part time in 2019).³

Because so many workers with disabilities are part time workers, they often are not eligible for unemployment insurance. However, the newly passed Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program and the increased benefits of Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (PUC) program extends unemployment insurance to more part time workers and thus will cover many more workers with disabilities. Given the increased costs due to the pandemic for people with

¹ National Council on Disability, 2017 Progress Report (2017): <https://ncd.gov/newsroom/2017/disability-poverty-connection-2017-progress-report-release>.

² Center for American Progress, A Fair Shot for Workers with Disabilities (2015), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/poverty/reports/2015/01/28/105520/a-fair-shot-for-workers-with-disabilities/>.

³ Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics Summary (2020), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/disabl.nr0.htm>.

disabilities who may have to self-isolate for longer due to pre-existing conditions, this improvement to the unemployment system is important and long needed.

However, unemployment benefits can impact eligibility for other means-tested programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). SNAP provides millions of people with disabilities and their families with crucial food assistance. Compared to people without disabilities, people with disabilities and their families are significantly more likely to experience hunger and food insecurity.⁴ With 95% of Americans under some form of a stay at home order and massive job loss,⁵ SNAP and other means tested benefits have become all the more crucial for people with disabilities and their families. In addition, children with disabilities receiving SSI may face a reduction in benefits due to their parents' claims of unemployment, due to deeming rules that do not count unemployment the same as wages. Unemployment benefits may also complicate Medicaid eligibility for workers with disabilities who are attempting to work via SSI's work incentive programs, despite Congress' decision to disregard PUC compensation for the purposes of Medicaid and CHIP.

As Congress has done before in emergencies and disasters, it makes sense to exempt this emergency unemployment from all means-tested programs. We thank you for introducing the Strengthening UI for Coronavirus Impacted Workers and Students Act and urge Congress to pass this legislation to ensure that low-income workers with disabilities and low-income families with children with disabilities, and others will not have to choose between their Medicaid, SSI, SNAP, and UI in this time of crisis.

Sincerely,

American Physical Therapy Association
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Center for Public Representation
Community Legal Services of Philadelphia
Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation
Easterseals
Epilepsy Foundation
Institute for Educational Leadership
Justice in Aging
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators

⁴ Carlson, Steven, Keith-Jennings, Brynne, and Chaudhry, Raheem (2017). SNAP Provides Needed Food Assistance to Millions of People with Disabilities. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-provides-needed-food-assistance-to-millions-of-peoplewith>.

⁵ Mervosh, S., Lu, D., & Swales, V. (2020, March 24). See Which States and Cities Have Told Residents to Stay at Home. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-stay-at-home-order.html>.

National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Disability Rights Network
National Disability Rights Network
National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives
National Women's Law Center
RespectAbility
Social Security Works
The Arc of the United States
United Spinal Association

CC: Chairman of Ways and Means, the Honorable Richard Neal; Ranking Member of Ways and Means, the Honorable Kevin Brady.