



June 9, 2017

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA), the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA), the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD), and the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), we write to oppose the President's Fiscal Year 2018 proposal to consolidate and significantly reduce funding for three critical programs in the US states and territories. This proposal includes a \$57 million reduction in funds for persons with disabilities by creating a new program called *Partnerships for Innovation, Inclusion, and Independence* within the Administration for Community Living in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Proposed funding for this new program is \$45 million, which is a significant reduction in funds currently appropriated for our separate programs.

Our programs work across the states and territories in an effort to provide community-based supports and services to those with different types of disabilities. However, each of the programs has a unique and distinctly different mission, which would impede the purpose of creating this new program. Attempting to combine programs that support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities with programs that support people who have substantiated a traumatic brain injury and the cross-disability population will result in a diluted and misguided attempt to put all people under one group and people with disabilities will not be adequately accounted for and served within the states.

Congress has long recognized that there is great diversity within the disability community. Over the years, programs were authorized to address the diverse and unique needs of each population. In 1970, the Councils on Developmental Disabilities, and in 1975, the Protection and Advocacy (P&A) agencies were added to the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) to the Act now known as the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) to advocate for and serve the population of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In 1978, Congress authorized the Independent Living Program and authorized federal funding for Centers for Independent Living (CILs) to serve people with all disabilities of all ages. The program was reauthorized in 2014. In addition, the Traumatic Brain Injury Act of 1996, reauthorized in 2014, created and funded the State Grant program for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) located 19 states to develop and expand rehabilitative and community-based services specific to the needs of individuals with TBI.

We firmly believe that the DD Councils are already in their best home along with their two other DD Act partners, the P&As and UCEDDs. DD Councils are currently perfectly positioned to provide critical supports and authentic voices that aid Governors and state legislatures in making their state fully inclusive of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Similarly, the Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILC) are also well positioned in each state to serve a cross-disability population in line with the independent living philosophy and emphasizing consumer control. Further, the Independent Living Part B funding in question funds far more than the SILC's, contributing to states' CIL funding, service provision, outreach, and training and technical assistance. Likewise, the State grant programs for those with TBI are active and achieving much success in the 19 states where they exist with their current structure.

We fully recognize that there are times when consolidation of programs makes great sense. The DD Act is one of those consolidation examples of a perfect pairing of organizations and missions that serve one distinct population. In some states, there are times that the SILC, DD Council and TBI grant program will come together around a common goal. However, these three programs are not designed to function in a consolidated manner and continue to meet the diverse needs of the people they were established to support.

People with all types of disabilities deserve the best we can offer in order to help them live the best life possible – with independence, control over their own lives, and dignity. To that end, we strongly urge you to continue to fund our separate programs and not support the creation of the *Partnership for Innovation, Inclusion and Independence* as proposed in the President's FY '18 budget.

Sincerely,



Donna Meltzer
Chief Executive Officer, NACDD



Susan Vaughn
Director of Public Policy, NASHIA



Kelly Buckland
Executive Director, NCIL



Susan Connors
President/CEO, BIAA