

ID/A COALITION

THE INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND AUTISM SERVICES COALITION OF PENNSYLVANIA

VIA Email

Honorable Jake Corman
350 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Honorable Kim Ward
292 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Honorable Pat Browne
281 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Honorable Vincent Hughes
545 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Honorable Bryan Cutler
139 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Honorable Kerry Benninghoff
110 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Honorable Stan Saylor
245 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Honorable Matthew Bradford
512E Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

RE: Invest Pennsylvania's American Rescue Plan Dollars into HCBS System

Dear Pennsylvania Legislative Leaders:

As members of the Intellectual Disability and Autism (ID/A) Services Coalition in Pennsylvania, we are calling on the General Assembly to immediately release funds allocated to the state through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) to provide critical support to the ID/A community. The Commonwealth has the unprecedented opportunity to alleviate the growing pressure on the ID/A system which is nearing collapse. We respectfully request the General Assembly allocate funding from the ARP to support individuals with ID/A, their families, and their caregivers.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to disproportionately impact the whole ID/A community – individuals, families, and providers. Providers of ID/A services face extreme pressure on their finances as they have had to close programs, purchase PPE for staff on the open market, and continue to ensure the health and safety of all the individuals they serve despite high staff turnover. In Pennsylvania, we are now seeing a Direct Support Professional (DSP) staff turnover rate over 50% and staff vacancy rate approaching 30%. We are now seeing a Direct Support Professional (DSP) staff turnover rate of 55% in Pennsylvania. The DSP wage, which is set by

THE ID/A COALITION CONSISTS OF STATEWIDE ADVOCACY AND PROVIDER ORGANIZATIONS ADVOCATING FOR SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND AUTISM IN PENNSYLVANIA.
FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CONTACT ANY OF THE ORGANIZATIONS LISTED:

DISABILITY RIGHTS PENNSYLVANIA (800.692.7443) REHABILITATION & COMMUNITY PROVIDERS ASSOCIATION (717.364.3280)

PA ADVOCACY AND RESOURCES FOR AUTISM AND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY (717.236.2374) THE ARC OF PA (717.234.2621)

the Commonwealth, is not equal to the essential work they do. Providers are struggling to recruit & retain staff at a competitive wage - notably the median DSP wage in Pennsylvania is \$13.20 – and cannot compete as corporate businesses raise their staff salaries and include large sign on bonuses. Without qualified, experienced staff to support individuals in the community, the lives of the individuals with ID/A are severely impacted. Providers across the state need relief now to ensure the continuation of these essential supports and services for people with ID/A.

Also, critical investment by the state is needed immediately to support individuals with disabilities and their family caregivers. The closure of community programs and social distancing requirements further isolated individuals and families from friends and their communities. As of June 30, 2021, there are 12,359 individuals with IDD on the wait list for supports and services, with 5,135 of those in an emergency where they need services within the next 6 months. Likewise, there are 2,541 individuals with autism on the wait list for supports and services, with 2,131 of those in an emergency. Moreover, the lack of support for the workforce means that the responsibility of care and support often falls on unpaid family caregivers. This is especially critical as more family caregivers are aging themselves and taking care of their adult child. The workforce and earnings losses related to unpaid family caregiving are significant and well-documented. Investment into the community system would help address inequities and strengthen our economy by supporting direct support professionals and allowing family caregivers to rejoin the workforce.

It is essential that Pennsylvania act immediately with the ARP funds already available to ensure that ID/A providers can continue to offer the essential services needed by people with ID/A. Without immediate investment into the ID/A system, more providers will reduce services or go out of business. We urge you to utilize Pennsylvania’s remaining ARP dollars to support individuals with ID/A, their families, and caregivers who continue to be disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,

Members of the PA ID/A Coalition



Mark Davis, President and CEO
PAR (Pennsylvania Advocates and Resources for
Autism and Intellectual Disabilities)



Sherri Landis, Executive Director
The Arc of Pennsylvania

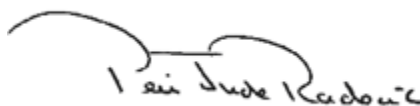
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Richard Edley, Ph.D., President and CEO
RCPA (Rehabilitation & Community Providers
Association)



Peri Jude Radecic, Esquire, CEO
Disability Rights Pennsylvania

cc:

Senator Robert Casey

Michael Gamel- McCormick, Disability Policy Director, U.S. Senate Special Committee
on Aging

Governor Tom Wolf

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