



UAA Center for
Human Development
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE



August 11, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Alaska Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE), Statewide Independent Living Council of Alaska (SILC), Center for Human Development (CHD - UCEDD), and the Disability Law Center of Alaska (DLCA—P&A) we write to oppose the President's Fiscal Year 2018 proposal to consolidate and significantly reduce funding for three critical programs in the United States and territories to serve persons with disabilities.

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, and will drastically reduce services for persons with disabilities.

Currently, our DD ACT partners, with our Statewide Independent Living Council and our Alaska Brain Injury Network (ABIN) work to ensure services to individuals with different types of disabilities. Although each of our programs collaborate extensively on a number of projects, each of us have unique and distinctly different missions which would impede the purpose of creating this new program. As it is now, the Alaska GCDSE is already a combination of three federally required Boards -- DD Council, Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP), and Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (ICC), as well as two state functions -- Advisory Board to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and governing board of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA). We believe that any further attempt to combine even more programs under one roof will result in more harm than good, especially with the very significant reduction in funding for the program as a whole.

We also 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 positioned to provide critical supports and authentic voices that aid Governors and state legislatures to make states fully inclusive for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, completing advocacy efforts with great effect and impact across the system.

Similarly, the Statewide Independent Living Councils are also well positioned in their current separate role to serve cross-disability populations. Further, the Independent Living Part B funding in question funds far more than the SILCs, contributing to states' CIL funding, service provision, outreach, and training and technical assistance. Elimination of this funding source for SILCs would most likely result in

a reallocation of other resources, pitting state administrations with disability advocates in the IL community for greatly reduced resources. Alaska does not have a TBI Advisory board, but it does have a stand-alone non-profit that serves this population and does so very well, primarily with state funding and very little federal funding.

We believe that forcing DD Councils, SILCs, and TBI boards under one roof and cutting two thirds of their current combined budgets would lead to 56 in-state and territorial resource battles, which would have the exact opposite impact than what is described in the P31 budget proposal. Our strength lies in our support of each other through collaboration, and not co-location. Alaska has an excellent record in this regard and we're very proud of that fact. We also understand this is not the case in all the states and U.S. territories. Therefore, we recommend that the Administration on Community Living, DHHS, consider other methods of fostering collaboration in states where it is not present. More technical assistance and demonstrations of collaboration for all the named groups, or requirements of shared goals, objectives, and outcomes in state plans would improve collaboration where needed.

People with all types of disabilities deserve the best we can offer in order to help them live with independence, control over their own lives, and dignity. To that end, we strongly urge the continued funding of our separate programs. We join together to oppose the creation of the Partnership for Innovation, Inclusion, and Independence as proposed in the President's FY '18 budget.

Sincerely,



Patrick Reinhart, Executive Director

Alaska Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education



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