

April 30, 2020

The Honorable Susan Collins
413 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Collins and Senator Bennet,

The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) writes to express our gratitude to you both for your support in urging Congressional Leadership to allow the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to waive the requirement that states must provide a 20 percent match for the \$400 million in election assistance grants included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in context of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

NDRN is the non-profit membership organization for the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy (P&A) and Client Assistance Program (CAP) agencies for individuals with disabilities. P&As and CAPs are in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Territories, and there is a P&A and CAP affiliated with the Native American Consortium in the Four Corners region of the Southwest. Collectively, the 57 P&A and CAP agencies are the largest provider of legally based advocacy services to people with disabilities in the U.S.

When Congress passed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) in 2002 they acknowledged the unique obstacles people with disabilities face when casting their ballots, and authorized the funding for the Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access (PAVA) program. This program allows P&As to advocate for voters with disabilities to have access to all aspects of the American voting process.

As election administrators adapt to the significant challenges COVID-19 brings to America's electoral system, it is critical that they have the necessary funds to make every effort to run elections on schedule, protect the health and safety of voters and elections personnel, and preserve access to the ballot for voters with disabilities.

NDRN encourages election administrators to enhance their options for remote voting while maintaining in-person voting systems to the greatest extent possible. In order for them to do this, our election administrators must have the necessary funds to do so. The \$400 million in new election funding included in the CARES Act will support their efforts in ensuring a safe and accessible election. However, Congress must modify the requirement that the EAC can only award this funding to states that provide a 20

percent match. The COVID-19 pandemic has added unexpected costs to already exhausted state budgets and the 20 percent match requirement would further limit many states from receiving this new, critical, election funding and therefore the match requirement must be eliminated immediately as we continue to prepare for the November 2020 election.

Thank you for your continued leadership on these important matters. If NDRN can be of any support on these issues moving forward, please do not hesitate to contact Erika Hudson, Public Policy Analyst, at Erika.hudson@ndrn.org or 202-408-9514 ext. 134.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Curtis L. Decker", is displayed within a light gray rectangular box.

Curtis L. Decker
Executive Director