

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 8, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy,

As co-chairs of the Bipartisan Disabilities Caucus, we ask you to include \$30 million in emergency appropriations for Protection and Advocacy agencies (P&As) in the next COVID-19 package. P&As protect the rights of people with disabilities by ensuring access and accountability in health care, education, employment, housing, transportation, voting, and the juvenile and criminal justice systems. People with disabilities are already reporting incidents of abuse and neglect related to the pandemic, and additional P&A funding is crucial to respond to these violations.

High-profile and deeply concerning incidents of abuse, neglect and discrimination against individuals with disabilities have already occurred as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. State and medical professional protocols for rationing health care have included directives that deny people with disabilities access to ventilators or other interventions on the basis of disability alone, without an individualized assessment. P&As are advocating against this discriminatory medical rationing and will need to continue this vigilant monitoring as the pandemic runs its course.

P&As are also on the frontlines of responding to education obligations under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, executive branch statutory waivers, direct support care workforce issues, and congregate care facility concerns. P&As have rapidly adapted their practices to operate in this new environment with additional need. However, providing these critical services and oversight will become increasingly difficult in the absence of additional funding.

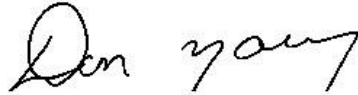
To ensure the cross disability nature of the work of the P&As, we request a \$10 million increase in the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities (PADD) program at the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living (ACL); a \$10 million increase in the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) program in the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and a \$10 million increase in the Protection and Advocacy for Individual Rights (PAIR) program, at the Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). An increase in funding for each of these programs, totaling \$30 million overall, will ensure that all individuals, regardless of disability, are protected.

An emergency appropriation of \$30 million in the next coronavirus rescue package is necessary to ensure the nationwide network of P&As can continue their response to new challenges posed by COVID-19. We appreciate your consideration of our request, and we look forward to working with you to support these important programs.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of James R. Langevin in black ink.

Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Dan Young in black ink.

Member of Congress

Cc: Chairman Frank Pallone, Ranking Member Greg Walden, Chairman Bobby Scott, and Ranking Member Virginia Foxx