August 25, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell The Honorable Charles Schumer

Majority Leader Minority Leader

U.S. Senate U.S. Senate

Washington, DC 20510 Washington, DC 20510

**Re: Disruptions to the U.S. Postal Service**

The undersigned organizations of the National Coalition for Accessible Voting are deeply concerned about reports of delays in deliveries and reductions in the capacity of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). Postmaster General Louis DeJoy has made drastic changes that have resulted in cuts to the USPS’s capacity. These changes not only have severe implications for the upcoming election, but endanger the lives of people with disabilities who depend on the USPS to deliver basic necessities, benefit checks, life-saving medications, and more.

The USPS recently warned election officials in 46 states and the District of Columbia that it cannot guarantee it will be able to deliver mail-in ballots on time, as those states have deadlines to request ballots that are very close to the election. This represents a threat to the voting rights of the millions of American voters who plan to vote by mail, many who are choosing to do so to maintain social distance during the Coronavirus pandemic. For millions of aging, disabled, and immune-compromised American voters, voting by mail is the safest available way to exercise the right to vote.

Beyond the threat to voting rights, millions of Americans depend on the USPS as a public service. Millions of Americans with disabilities and chronic health conditions depend on the USPS to deliver life-sustaining medications. The USPS delivers prescriptions daily to 330,000 veterans across the country. Recently people have shared stories of their prescriptions being delayed for weeks, putting their health at risk. For people who receive life-sustaining medications, income, or other necessities via the USPS income such delays pose serious threats to their lives.

The U.S. Postal Service has always been an essential service, but it has become even more essential during the Coronavirus crisis. The USPS handles 48% of the world’s mail volume, delivering to 160 million delivery points across 42,000 ZIP codes. For many Americans in rural areas, the USPS is the only delivery service that delivers to their homes. Beyond delivering medications, it also delivers benefits checks, tax returns, paychecks, and basic necessities to millions of Americans. During the Coronavirus pandemic, millions of Americans who are already suffering from job losses and worsening economic insecurity are now experiencing delays in receiving economic assistance and fulfilling basic daily needs due to these delays in USPS deliveries. For people with disabilities, this may mean delays in access to unemployment or VA benefits that help pay for housing, food, utilities, and other services and supplies that preserve their ability to live independently in their communities. It also means delays in receiving essential non-prescription medical supplies and other daily living necessities. This cannot continue.

Although the USPS recently announced it will suspend previously announced changes until after the election, exactly what this means remains unclear. Moreover, a suspension of policy changes is simply not enough to meet the needs of the American people during this pandemic and for the 2020 election. The House has taken action on this matter, including a vote on a new bill to address this issue, the Delivering for America Act (H.R. 8015) and a hearing with Mr. DeJoy before the House Committee on Oversight and Reform.

We appreciate that the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs has held a hearing on this issue, and we urge you to take further action as well. Such action can include working with the House on their current efforts or bringing the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act to the Senate floor for debate and a vote. The HEROES Act (H.R. 6800) was passed out of the House of Representatives and includes language to provide for $25 billion in emergency funding for the Postal Service; makes it easier for the Postal Service to borrow funds from the Department of the Treasury; and requires hazard pay of an additional $13.00 an hour to essential employees.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

American Council of the Blind
Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs
Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
American Association of People with Disabilities
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Rights Network
The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies
United Spinal
Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs
World Institute on Disability