

July 15, 2022

Senator Bob Casey
393 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3804

Dear Senator Casey:

On behalf of the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), I would like to thank you for your introduction and promotion of the Stop the Wait Act.

NDRN is the voluntary membership association for Protection and Advocacy (P&A) agencies. The P&A agencies are a nationwide network of congressionally mandated, cross disability organizations operating in every state in the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Territories (American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and the US Virgin Islands). There is also a P&A affiliated with the Native American Consortium which includes the Hopi, Navajo, and San Juan Southern Paiute Nations located in the Four Corners region of the Southwest.

The Stop the Wait Act is designed to eliminate the set waiting period following a person with a disability's application and approval to receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). After approval, he or she must go through a five-month waiting period before they can begin to collect their monthly benefit payment. At the same time, one must wait two years before receiving Medicare insurance. This can prove to be devastating, as persons with a disability are left without the necessary resources to maintain proper health, finances, and housing.

This bill will remove these two waiting periods. In doing so, people will be less likely to go destitute, lose their homes, or die while waiting to begin to receive their earned benefits. NDRN and the P&A Network have long worked to ensure that people with disabilities attain the necessary

resources to lead a stable life. NDRN and the 57 P&A agencies routinely hear stories about the consequences of not being able to receive insurance: reports of death due to recipients not obtaining their health benefits in time. The Stop the Wait Act will work to push back against the many problems we hear about far too often.

NDRN is especially excited how this new legislation will help those most affected by COVID-19. The coronavirus pandemic has created new challenges for people with disabilities. For instance, people with disabilities already had a higher unemployment rate and lower labor force participation rate than individuals without a disability and the United States economy has experienced job losses due to the pandemic. As a result, those with disabilities are even more likely to be left without a stable flow of income. A person with a disability cannot afford to wait 5 months to receive their benefits. This legislation will ensure that they would immediately receive the resources necessary to make their situation less onerous.

Again, NDRN applauds the introduction of this important piece of legislation, which will eliminate the unnecessarily long waiting period before receiving critical benefits. We look forward to working with you to enact this legislation into law. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Claire Stanley, Public Policy Analyst, at Claire.stanley@ndrn.org.

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
National Disability Rights Network