



LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

21st Century Assistive Technology Act

Overview

The 21st Century Assistive Technology Act reauthorizes the Assistive Technology Act of 2004. Introduced by Senators Bob Casey (D-PA), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Susan Collins (R-ME), Kevin Cramer (R-ND), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Representatives by Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA), and Joe Sempolinski (R-NY), this bill modernizes and updates the current law.

This summary details how the 21st Century Assistive Technology Act modernizes the 2004 reauthorization and works to build capacity for the two programs involved: Section 4 State Assistive Technology Act Grantees and Section 5 Protection and Advocacy Systems.

Section 4 - State Assistive Technology Grantees:

- This bill maintains *flexibility*, a key pillar from the 2004 reauthorization, which means each State program shall determine how to spend their federal allocation to meet the State's unique needs (which are determined by an annual state-wide needs assessment).
- Another key pillar maintained in this bill is the *continuum of integrated assistive technology services outlined in the four state-level activities – device demonstration, device loan, reutilization, state financing* – that maximize the ability of individuals with disabilities and older Americans across the human lifespan, and across the wide array of disabilities, to increase access to and acquisition of assistive technology.
- This bill supports collaboration between Section 4 State AT Grantees and other state funding sources to maximize the availability for accessing and acquiring assistive technology through device demonstration, loan, reuse, and state financing activities.
- The bill modifies the definition of alternative financing to restrict the Secretary from identifying other areas of alternative financing other than: a low-interest loan fund; an interest buy-down program; a revolving loan fund; or a loan guarantee or insurance program.
- The state's minimum allotment remains to be \$410,000 but the U.S. Territories are increased from \$125,000 to \$150,000.

Section 5 - Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology (PAAT):

- This bill synchronizes the program income rules for the Protection and Advocacy Assistive Technology (PAAT) program with the Department of Health and Human Services' rules rather than the rules of the Department of Education where the program was previously located.
- This bill adds a provision to ensure that minimum allotment states includes an increase in the size of their PAAT grant once the program reaches \$8,000,000 in funding.

Section 6 - Technical Assistance and Data Reporting

- The bill provides for both the data and technical assistance grant to be competed or contracted in one grant or contract. New requirements ensuring expertise in all Section 4 state-level and state-leadership activities are include in the qualifications for eligible entities to receive a grant.

Section 7 - Projects of National Significance

- Once Sections 4 and 5 reach close to full funding (\$49 million), then Congress can allocate funds, no more than \$2 million annually, for an outlined set of innovative collaborations that entities under Section 4 and 5, along with other private or public nonprofit entities, may pursue. These activities must increase access to and acquisition of assistive technology along with create opportunities for individuals with disabilities to contribute to all facets of education, employment, community living, and recreational activities. Following this mission, these activities could include: to develop/expand partnerships between State Medicaid agencies; increase collaboration between Section 4 AT Act Grantees and Money Follows Person; to increase collaboration between Section 4 AT Act Grantees and Area Agencies on Aging; to assist youth with disabilities with transitioning from school to adult life; to address the needs of aging individual and caregivers regarding how to access and acquire assistive technology; to address early intervention for infant and toddlers with disabilities from birth to age 3; to increase awareness and access to the Disability Funds-Financial Assistance funding provided by the Community Development Financial Institution Fund; and to fund alternative financing programs.

Section 8 – Administrative Provisions

- The bill includes language that outlines the clear oversight role of the Health and Human Services Administration for Community Living for Sections 4 and 5.

Section 9 – Authorization of Appropriations

- The bill outlines how the federal allocation will be spent between Sections 4, 5, and 6. Two percent of funds will be split between Sections 4 and 5 to support the separate technical assistance awards. The remaining portion of federal funds will be divided between Sections 4 and 5, with Section 4 receiving 85.5 percent and Section 5 receiving 14.5 percent.

CO-SPONSORS

Senator Bob Casey (D-PA)

Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH)

Senator Susan Collins (R-ME)

Senator Kevin Cramer (R-ND)

Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

Congressman Joe Sempolinski (R-NY)

Congressman Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA)

CONCLUSION

This bill was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate through the authorization of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on December 14, 2022.

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