

SUPPORT FUNDING FOR ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS

DEADLINE: Friday, March 22nd, by COB

FY19 SIGNERS: Glenn 'GT' Thompson, Raúl M. Grijalva, Ted Lieu, Pramila Jayapal, Suzanne Bonamici, Cheri Bustos, Earl Blumenauer, Brendan F. Boyle, Brad Schneider, Jenniffer González-Colón, Carol Shea-Porter, Adriano Espaillat, Kevin Cramer, Robert A. Brady, Peter DeFazio, Danny K. Davis, Collin C. Peterson, Peter Welch, Emanuel Cleaver H, Daniel W. Lipinski, Al Green, Wm. Lacy Clay, Jackie Speier, Mark Takano, Chellie Pingree, Raja Krishnamoorthi, Dwight Evans, Brian Fitzpatrick, Tim Walz, Andre Carson, Mark DeSaulniers, Rodney Davis, Madeleine Bordallo, Lisa Blunt Rochester, Tulsi Gabbard, A. Donald McEachin, Diana DeGette, Brenda Lawrence, Zoe Lofgren, Jared Polis

Dear Colleague,

As members of the House Committee on Education and Labor, we understand the importance of assistive technology and ask you to join us in requesting full funding for FY2020 in the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill.

Assistive technology funding enables individuals with disabilities to thrive in school, the workplace and the community by providing them with the tools and services they need to carryout daily activities. Assistive technology includes typing telephones for individuals who are deaf or motorized wheelchairs for those who cannot walk. These funds are used to benefit people of all ages with disabilities and the technology continues to make a meaningful impact on their lives and the communities they live in.

It is critical that we fund assistive technology programs at the appropriated level. We invite you to join us in sending the following letter requesting full funding for assistive technology programs. Please contact Nick Rockwell (Nick.Rockwell@mail.house.gov) in Rep. Thompson's office by **COB Friday, March 22**, with any questions or to sign on.

Sincerely,

GLENN 'GT' THOMPSON
Member of Congress

RAÚL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

March 28, 2019

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chairwoman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor
Health and Human Services, and Education
2358-B Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole, Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor
Health and Human Services, and Education
1016 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

As you prepare the Fiscal Year 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we respectfully request full funding for the Assistive Technology Act (P.L. 108-364) programs.

All 50 states, 4 U.S. territories, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico receive formula grant funding under the Assistive Technology (AT) Act of 2004. These 56 grantees are required to carry out a continuum of specified state level and state leadership activities that increase the access to and acquisition of assistive technology, including state financing activities (such as financial loans, cooperative buy, funds of last resort, etc.), device reutilization (including recycling, repair, refurbishment and device exchange), device loan/borrowing and device demonstration services. These services are available for persons with all types of disabilities, all ages, in all environments (education, employment, community living and information technology). While families and guardians are the primary beneficiaries of services for individuals with disabilities, State AT Act programs provide a wide range of services and supports to other targeted individuals such as educators, employers, health care providers, rehabilitation providers, and technology experts, including web designers, procurement officials and AT manufacturers and vendors.

There are three sections within the Assistive Technology Act: Section 4 is the State AT Programs, Section 5 is the nationwide network of Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology (PAAT) programs, which are in every state and territory providing needed advocacy services to children and adults with disabilities, and Section 6 is the National Assistive Technology Technical Assistance Partnership. All of these activities deliver a large return on investment even with the small federal appropriation received for this program. Specifically, Section 4 formula-funded State AT Programs receives only a \$26.5 million federal investment and their return on investment is over \$63 million in savings and benefits.

Also, State AT Programs successfully leverage funds to support all of the State AT Programs' authorized activities and in FY 2018, State AT Programs leveraged over \$21 million in funding from federal, state, local and private sources. If full funding were allocated for FY 2020 for authorized AT Act programs, it would be well spent and would generate matching investments from states and from the private sector.

The AT Act puts assistive technology in the hands of citizens whose lives and livelihood depend on it. As an example, State AT programs provide children with Autism, veterans injured in Afghanistan, individuals diagnosed with debilitating cancer, and adults with cerebral palsy with assistive technology they need to continue attending school, getting into the workforce or staying employed, or living and participating in their communities. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,