



April 6, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the National Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP), we **strongly urge you to support the inclusion of \$55 million in the phase four stimulus package for the Section 4 of the Assistive Technology (AT) Act. Based on an assessment of programs' current front-line needs, it will between \$300,000 to \$2,000,000 per state to accommodate remote working environments; meet the need of consumer demands for devices to combat social isolation, educational needs, employment needs (possibly due to working remotely); and create innovative solutions to a rapidly changing landscape.** Funding provided through the AT Act supports programs that assure people with disabilities have access to and acquisition of the assistive technology services they need to live, work, and access education and services. COVID-19 is changing the "needs" demanded by the aging and people with disabilities as well as creating new barriers that need to be overcome to enable full breadth of delivery of direct services.

State AT Act programs operate in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and four territories and are available for persons with all types of disabilities, all ages, in all environments (education, employment, community living and information technology). State AT programs provide a continuum of services 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.

State AT Programs work directly with families, medical providers, schools, employers, and communities to ensure that individuals have access to the assistive technology they need. It is essential to expand the capacity of these services as there will be an increased demand in assistive technology as COVID-19 spreads throughout the nation.

ATAP supports a \$55 million allocation in the stimulus package that would enable State Assistive Technology Act Programs across the country to:



- Build/develop a telehealth presence for device demonstrations - such remote ability could allow for someone to be able to acquire the assistive technology and be trained on how to use the assistive technology. With a stronger telepresence, State AT programs can begin to expand operations and provide more direct services to consumers during the time of COVID-19.
- **Greatly increased need to purchase devices to add to the State AT Programs' loan libraries to provide longer term loans for an existing need, or a newly developed need due to COVID-19. States need to have funds to purchase the proper and needed devices during this time.** For example, states are in need of tablets to aid with social isolation during this time of self-quarantine.
- Shifting to an online world creates Information and Communication Technology (ICT) accessibility needs across states with their state and local governmental websites but also with local businesses as services move entirely to a digital format. All websites need to be fully accessible to meet the needs of people with disabilities and consumers. State AT Programs can work to ensure full accessibility of these websites.
- Finally, partnerships need to be created to find creative solutions to getting assistive technology into the hands of consumers during a time of social distancing. This will take funds to work outside regular modes of distributing AT along with increased needs and cost to the sanitization of the assistive technology our programs are providing for consumers.

If you need further information about the AT Act and the programs and services it supports please contact Audrey Busch at Audrey.busch@ataporg.org. Thank you for your time and attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Audrey Busch".

Audrey Busch
Executive Director
ATAP

CC:

Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
Senate Majority Leadership
Senate Minority Leadership