



June 17, 2021

Senator Joe Manchin
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Manchin,

On behalf of the National Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP), we strongly urge your support of the legislation that outlines the \$400 billion included in President Biden's American Jobs Plan to support Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS).

State and Territory Assistive Technology (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 in every community that increases 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 and Territory AT Act programs have seen first-hand the impact of this pandemic on people with disabilities and older adults -- a vulnerable population facing the daunting challenges of contracting COVID-19. The need to limit exposure and isolate from the virus continues to be a paramount objective for this population. State and Territory AT Act Programs see the dire need to provide people with disabilities, and other vulnerable individuals, with life-sustaining services and supports, including assistive technology.

Sustained, longer-term Federal support is needed to address the crisis. We cannot continue with the over reliance on congregate settings, underpayment of direct care workers and lack of home and community-based services for people with disabilities and older adults. The \$400 billion to support HCBS, included in the American Jobs Plan, is essential to addressing the direct care workforce, and improving access to home-based care and long-term services and supports.

State and Territory AT Act Programs stand uniquely positioned to assure ensure caregivers find the proper AT for a person with a disability or an older adult and to continue this support as the individual adjusts and incorporates the AT into their everyday life. Furthermore, State and Territory AT Act programs are best positioned to help provide AT expertise to find the best match of AT for consumers through home and community-based services. The programs have seen first-hand the need for their involvement in the process of finding the proper piece of AT to allow the person with a disability, or an older adult, to remain in their home, instead of moving into an institution.

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The need for additional assistive technology, supports and services, as well as a skilled direct care workforce existed before COVID-19 but is gravely needed now. The global pandemic has highlighted these alarming needs. Therefore, ATAP strongly requests your support of the \$400 billion investment in the infrastructure of Medicaid HCBS, and the workforce that provides the services and supports that allow individuals with disabilities, in every community, to live independent and successful lives. Congress must act to address the serious, destabilizing deficits facing our nation's only publicly funded long term care system by including this funding. Thank you. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact Audrey Busch at audrey.busch@ataporg.org.

Sincerely,

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

Executive Director
Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs