



April 29, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

On behalf of the National Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP), we **strongly urge you to include \$50 million over five years to support capacity building efforts for the Assistive Technology (AT) Act.** 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 the 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.

The pandemic has created an increased demand for assistive technology and a demand for services provided by State Assistive Technology Act Programs; however, the limited funding provided through Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations is not sufficient to support the range of new services the AT Act programs have been asked to deliver. For example, State AT Act programs have been called upon by community and state partners to print accessible materials for vaccination sites, to verify the accessibility of websites or of physical buildings designated for COVID-19 response activities. While AT Act programs are good community partners, it is their experience so far that such requests are not made with an offer for additional funds and the program has been operating on an already fragile budget. It is clear, State AT Programs need to be enabled to increase the capacity of their programs throughout the



56 State and Territories to ensure people with disabilities have full access to pandemic-focused services and sites.

State and Territory AT Act Programs are uniquely positioned to serve all individuals with disabilities, including school-age children, adults living in or just above the poverty line, and the aging population. In order to increase the capacity of State Assistive Technology Act Programs, the funds will be used to do the following:

- 1) Grow and expand the assistive technologies in State AT Program loan libraries;
- 2) Hire new employees to serve the increased demand across all states and territories;
- 3) Secure commercial real estate to house reutilization device programs and increased loan libraries for assistive technologies;
- 4) Build reutilization programs at the state that provides gently used assistive technologies at a greatly reduced price, or at no cost to consumers (this activity is the most in-demand activity out of the four activities provided by State Assistive Technology Act Programs).

We respectfully request a meeting with your office to discuss how AT Act Programs can support an agenda that continues to respond to the pandemic and looks ahead in expanding and strengthening the capacity of individuals with disabilities to utilize technology to further their education, access the workplace and live independently in their community.

Sincerely,

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

Audrey Busch
Executive Director
ATAP

cc: Senate HELP Committee, Senate Appropriations Committee