March 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
135 Dirksen Senator Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

On behalf of the National Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP) and the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), we **strongly urge you to support the inclusion of $50 million in the FY 2022 Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations (LHHS) bill for the Assistive Technology (AT) Act programs.** 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 attend school in their communities.

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. While individuals with disabilities, their families and guardians are the primary beneficiaries of services, 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. State AT programs provide cost effective services and supports that improve the lives of people with disabilities and warrant an ongoing federal investment. Still, there are 2 states and the District of Columbia that do not receive the minimum grant authorized in the law in 2004 ($410,000).

The nationwide network of Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology programs in every state, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, four territories, and a fifty-seventh agency serving the Hopi, Navaho, and San Juan Southern Paiute tribes in the Four Corners region has been similarly under-funded. Twenty-six programs receive a minimum allotment of just $50,000 and all the territories receive $30,000. Larger states such as Pennsylvania ($1150,481), Georgia

($123,602), Florida ($250,264), and Ohio ($137,349) receive insufficient funding when compared to their populations. The PAAT programs use these very limited funds to provide needed advocacy services to children and adults with disabilities. Every PAAT program conducts trainings and works with families, medical providers, schools, employers, and communities to ensure that individuals have access to the assistive technology they need.

The AT Act puts assistive technology in the hands of citizens whose lives and livelihood depend on it. If $50 million were allocated for FY 2022 for authorized AT Act programs, it would be well spent and would generate matching investments from states and from the private sector. Given the current level of demand experienced by all these agencies -- as well as the heightened demand for the assistive technology needs of wounded veterans and an aging population – reaching the level of fully funding the AT Act is critically needed.

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, or Eric Buehlmann at eric.buehlmann@ndrn.org. Thank you for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,

Audrey Busch
Executive Director
ATAP

Curt Decker
Executive Director
NDRN