

DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION RESEARCH COALITION

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June 11, 2020

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
U.S. House of Representatives
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
U.S. House of Representatives
2207 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: COVID-19 Related Research: Increase Funding for National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research; Report Language Request on Research Priorities for Federal Research Agencies

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

On behalf of the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Coalition (DRRC), we write to support a recent request by NARRTC to increase COVID-19-related funding in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 for the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR). In addition, we are requesting As federal research agencies are only beginning to grapple with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the DRRC has urged the federal government to prioritize research and data collection on COVID-19 relating to people with disabilities, who are at extremely high risk for COVID infection, serious complications, and death. Increasing NIDILRR funding specifically to fund COVID-19 disability research will be crucial to developing and strengthening the federal pandemic response for people with disabilities.

COVID-19 and Disability-Related Research Funding at the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research

NIDILRR's mission is to generate and promote new knowledge that improves the abilities of people with disabilities to perform activities of their choice in the community. Not only are people with disabilities an at-risk minority group facing significant health disparities even before the pandemic, case reports are indicating that the long-term clinical complications of this virus are leading previously nondisabled individuals to develop potentially lifelong disabilities as a result of their infection.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the House Bipartisan Disabilities Caucus requested a \$3 million increase for NIDILRR in FY 2021 to carry out its mission. Now, NARRTC, the professional association of NIDILRR grantees, has circulated a call to action requesting an additional \$5-10 million funding increase for NIDILRR in FY 2021 to address the urgent research and policy questions around the impact of COVID-19 on the disability population, for a total NIDILRR budget of \$120-\$125 million. On behalf the members of the DRRC, we urge you to support this funding increase in the next appropriations cycle to ensure that NIDILRR can appropriately address the dire research needs stemming from this pandemic.

Report Language on Disability Research Priorities at the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Other Federal Research Agencies

While additional NIDILRR funding is crucial to developing applied research for long-term outcomes in the disability population, NIDILRR is not the only federal agency conducting critical disability research. Therefore, we are also requesting report language to be added to the FY 2021 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill emphasizing the importance of disability research across all federal agencies conducting COVID-19 research, expected to be a major priority for federal funding over the coming (and future) fiscal year. We respectfully propose the following language:

“The Committee urges the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other federal agencies conducting research on COVID-19 to ensure that their research plans address and prioritize disability, independent living, and rehabilitation research, especially regarding COVID-19 testing and diagnoses; treatment, including admissions and denials to hospitals and intensive care units, denials of needed accommodations, virus interactions with chronic disease and disability, and recovery patterns; and outcomes, including morbidities, mortalities, rehabilitation, and recovery for individuals with disabilities.”

Thank you for your consideration of our requests. We look forward to continuing to work with you to advance public policy impacting people with disabilities. If you have any questions, please contact the DRRC coordinators listed below.

Sincerely,

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