



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

May 31, 2019

The Hon. Robert Casey
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Sen. Casey:

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) applaud your introduction of the Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion (REAADI) for Disasters Act. CCD is a coalition of national disability rights, advocacy, consumer, provider and self-advocate organizations representing this nation's more than 61 million Americans with disabilities.

Since the turn of this century, our nation has experienced a number of catastrophic disasters with extensive loss of life and property damage. Too often, older individuals and people with disabilities have been overlooked in the preparation for and response to these emergencies and have struggled to obtain the appropriate supports and services they need to rebuild their lives. The REAADI Act will create a number of mechanisms to promote a well-designed emergency preparedness, disaster response and recovery system to ensure the safety, well-being, accessibility, rights and dignity of people with disabilities, older adults and others with access and functional needs impacted by disasters.

The REAADI for Disasters Act would establish a National Commission on Disability Rights and Disasters to study the needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults and others with access and functional needs throughout emergency preparation and planning, disaster response, recovery and mitigation. The commission will provide recommendations on how Federal, tribal, territorial, state, local and non-governmental response agencies, disability and community organizations and other stakeholders can better coordinate and provide for the needs of individuals with disabilities in disaster impacted communities before, during and after disasters, and how to optimize resources for supporting those recommendations.

Beyond the Commission, this bill also aims to enhance technical assistance to state and local emergency managers and disaster relief agencies to assure that the needs of people with disabilities and older Americans are addressed throughout emergency preparedness, disaster response, recovery, mitigation and community resilience efforts. There are also positive provisions in the legislation calling for a review of all Americans with Disabilities Act settlement agreements related to disaster response activities for the

past twelve years. Such an investigation is critical to determine if federal disaster funds have been used appropriately for access to emergency programs and services.

Effective emergency preparedness and disaster response are a matter of life and death for people with disabilities and older adults. With the passage and implementation of the READI for Disasters Act, people with disabilities and older adults will no longer be disproportionately affected by the disruptions experienced when disaster strikes, and communities will be far better prepared to optimize limited resources and maximize positive outcomes for everyone. A well-designed and accessible system, put into place well before the next disaster strikes, will be more responsive, more effective, and more cost-efficient, significantly improving community readiness, resilience and disaster recovery for everyone.

Thank you for championing this effort. We look forward to working with you to ensure passage of this vital legislation during the 116th Congress.

American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association on Health and Disability (AAHD)
American Music Therapy Association
American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Therapeutic Recreation Association
American Physical Therapy Association
Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP)
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Autism Society of America
Blinded Veterans Association
Brain Injury Association of America
Center for Public Representation
Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)
Easterseals
Epilepsy Foundation
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies
TASH
The Arc of the United States
United Spinal Association
VetsFirst