

# U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



CHAIRMAN Special Committee on Aging

## The Health Equity for People with Disabilities Act

### Why is the Health Equity for People with Disabilities Act Needed?

Sixty-one (61) million people with disabilities live in the U.S. Even though people with disabilities often have more frequent and intensive health care needs than others, they face consistent, decades-long inequities in health care access. These are driven by such factors as a lack of providers who understand the specific health needs of people with disabilities, a lack of accessible diagnostic equipment, and insufficient communication resources, including sign language interpretation and plain language instructions.

Adults with disabilities are almost twice as likely as others to report unmet health needs due to barriers to accessing care. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 1 in 3 adults with disabilities do not have a usual health care provider, and many struggle to afford the care they need. In addition, 1 in 4 adults with a disability did not have a routine check-up in the past year. These barriers contribute to higher rates of chronic disease and shorter life expectancy. Every American deserves access to high-quality, regular health care when they need it, regardless of their disability status.

### How does the Health Equity for People with Disabilities Act address these disparities?

The Health Equity for People with Disabilities Act amends the Public Health Services Act Section 330, which authorizes community health centers, to ensure the centers are prepared to serve the health care needs of people with disabilities within the existing medically underserved groups and medically underserved areas. It provides community health centers with quality improvement grants to improve staff skills and ensure settings and equipment are accessible to reduce barriers to care of people with disabilities in their clinics. Including such a priority will expand accessible, quality health care services to millions of people with disabilities and reduce health inequities.

**Supporting Organizations:** *American Association on Health and Disability, Lakeshore Foundation, Association of University Centers on Disabilities, Autistic Women and Nonbinary Network, The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies, United Spinal Association, Epilepsy Foundation, Autism Society of America, National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities, National Down Syndrome Congress, National Disability Rights Network, American Association of People with Disabilities, The Arc of the United States, Little Lobbyists*

**Co-Sponsors:** *Senator Merkley, Senator Welch, Senator Kaine, Senator Gillibrand, Senator Duckworth*