

April 26, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair, Committee on Appropriations  
U.S Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations  
U.S Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chair, Committee on Appropriations  
U.S House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations  
U.S House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our deep concern over the rescission of the statutorily mandated inflationary increase to the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State grants program included in the general provisions section of the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024. Unfortunately, this decision, coming six months into the fiscal year (FY), significantly impacts State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies that were budgeting for the statutorily mandated inflationary increase. While we understand that FY 2024 funding is finalized, we urge the Committees not to utilize this rescission in the FY 2025 appropriations cycle.

The VR State grant program provides formula grants for State agencies to help individuals with disabilities secure competitive integrated employment and to support the workforce needs of businesses—meeting them with qualified candidates. Over one million individuals with disabilities receive services annually through this program. Unfortunately, many States are unable to serve all individuals in need and must give priority to those with the most significant disabilities. To ensure State agencies have the resources they require to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities, the statute for the VR State grants program guarantees an annual inflationary increase in program funding. This makes sure that State agencies have the resources to cover increased annual costs. While a minority of state agencies are not able to utilize all the Federal funding they receive (and must relinquish such funds), the vast majority fully utilize such funding. Many agencies also seek additional funding (from funding that is relinquished by the minority of agencies) to expand their ability to serve individuals with disabilities in their State. Of the 78 State and territory agencies that participate in the program, only agencies in 19 States relinquished funds in FY 2023 and 13 agencies sought additional funding to further enhance services in their State for individuals with disabilities.

While the U.S. Department of Education has helped States that relinquish funds better utilize the resources they receive under the program in the past, this mid-year rescission comes at an unfortunate time. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023 marked the highest recorded percentage of employed individuals with disabilities since data was first collected in 2008. Despite this progress, the rate of employment for individuals with disabilities is still 33 percent lower than for those without disabilities. Notwithstanding this recent progress in the employment rates of individuals with disabilities, the rescission effectively reduces funding for many States seeking to keep this momentum going to improve employment outcomes.

While we understand the FY 2024 funding for VR State grants is set, we urge you to not to continue the practice of deferring the annual inflationary increase for this program in FY 2025 and beyond. The

resources provided to State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies are too valuable and already limited, and maintaining funding levels is crucial for advancing employment for individuals with disabilities. Should you have any questions, please contact Tonia Ferguson, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), at [tferguson@csavr.org](mailto:tferguson@csavr.org) and Alex Nock, representing PACER Center, at [anock@pennhillgroup.com](mailto:anock@pennhillgroup.com).

Sincerely,

**The Undersigned Organizations**

Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Autism Society of America  
Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB)  
National Disability Institute  
National Down Syndrome Congress  
National Down Syndrome Society  
National Rehabilitation Association  
PACER Center  
RespectAbility  
The Advocacy Institute  
The Arc of the United States

CC: Chair Tammy Baldwin, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies; Ranking Member Shelley Moore Capito, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies; Chair Robert Aderholt, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies; Chair Bernie Sanders, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee; Ranking Member Bill Cassidy, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee; Chairwoman Virginia Foxx, House Committee on Education and the Workforce; Ranking Member Bobby Scott, House Committee on Education and the Workforce