

Dear (Insert MOC name):

My name is (your name here). I am a disabled constituent and voter, and my life is worth living. I am writing to urge you to stand up for the 1 in 5 Americans who are disabled and scared of dying during the Coronavirus epidemic in congregate settings and by the whim of ableist policies. Please ensure my survival and the survival of the disability community by supporting the Coronavirus Relief for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act of 2020 (S. 3544 and H.R. 6305). Beyond that, you must fight for funding for home and community based services and supports or HCBSS (including Money Follows the Person), protections and compensations for community workforce, and affordable, accessible, integrated housing (including emergency housing) to be included in the next COVID package.

(OPPORTUNITY TO INSERT PERSONAL STORY OR CONTINUE AS IS)

For decades, the disability community has challenged the federal government's institutional bias to fund nursing facilities and other institutions over HCBS. Since 1990, people with disabilities have had the right to stay in their own homes and live in their own communities with the services and supports they need, instead of being forced into nursing facilities and other institutional/congregate settings. However, this right has never been realized due to lack of support for home and community based services, an extremely under-compensated and undervalued home and community workforce, and the lack of affordable, accessible, integrated housing. We call this the institutional bias.

With thousands of disabled people of all ages DYING in nursing homes and other congregate settings because they have no protection from the highly contagious COVID 19, the need for reform to Medicaid long term care policy is imperative. Despite major media outlets reporting on the growing number of our family members and friends dying alone in nursing facilities and other congregate settings across the nation, ZERO of the trillions of dollars in COVID emergency spending that Congress has passed has gone toward support of a real, long term solution for the disability community: ending the institutional bias and supporting HCBS, the HCBS workforce, and affordable, accessible, integrated housing.

The tens of thousands of deaths caused by the Coronavirus could have been greatly reduced if our federal government had acted earlier, and if Congress had listened to our shouts for the past 3 decades and passed this much needed reform in long term care, workforce and housing policies.

So I ask you: have enough people needlessly died that you will finally listen to this disabled constituent and my community and address the institutional bias?

Now is the time to sufficiently fund home and community services.

Now is the time to fund affordable, accessible, integrated housing.

Now is the time to provide liveable wages to the essential workforce of direct support workers that allow us to live in the community.

Prove to us that you support the disability community and aren't looking to dispose of us. I urge you to fight for us and for the inclusion of funding for HCBS (including Money Follows the Person), community workforce, and housing (including emergency housing) in the COVID 4 package. Please support the Coronavirus Relief for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act of 2020 (S. 3544 and H.R. 6305). I want to survive the Coronavirus pandemic now and when it is over, I want to have a thriving life.

FREE OUR PEOPLE!

(Insert Name Here)