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ADAPT Demands Congress Include Funding for HCBS to Stop COVID Nursing Home Deaths of Aging and Disabled

Washington DC— ADAPT, the nation's largest grassroots disability rights activist organization, is on the East lawn of the nation's Capitol, demanding Congress include significant funding in a new COVID relief package to stem the flood of deaths that have occurred in congregate settings during the COVID -19 pandemic. The funding is vital for preventing the forced institutionalization that has led to thousands of deaths in these congregate settings, and for providing PPE and adequately paid caregivers to keep people safer in their own homes. Additional funding is also needed to provide affordable, accessible housing in the community. A second ADAPT demand is permanent reauthorization of the Money Follows the Person program. And a third demand is no Supreme Court appointment until after the November 3rd election.

Disabled and aging people in nursing homes, institutions, and other congregate settings like jails, prisons, and detention camps, are dying of COVID at alarming rates, and in alarming numbers. Covid relief packages so far have pumped money into nursing facilities, but those funds have not prevented 40% of the Covid deaths from occurring in the nation's nursing homes. Every day more and more nursing facilities and other congregate settings are becoming Covid cluster sites.

Multiple chapters in ADAPT's national network are joining the call to action in their own communities to demand that Congress provide funding for Home and Community Based Services to protect disabled and aging people living in the community; and to help disabled and aging people currently housed in institutions move to the safety of their own homes by reauthorizing the federal Money Follows the Person program.

"Of the measures passed to date by Congress to address the COVID pandemic, none has authorized funding to protect and support the 12 million disabled and aging people living in their own homes," said Rhoda Gibson activist from MA ADAPT. "Nor has any funding been authorized to provide a living wage, benefits, and hazard pay during the pandemic to support the attendant care workers who keep disabled and aging people living in their own homes. And none of the funding authorized so far has ensured that personal protective equipment and other necessary supplies are available to people living in the community and their workers."

The federal Money Follows the Person program has supported thousands of people to move from institutions into their own homes. In the absence of formal reauthorization since the program sunset in 2018, some states have had to end their programs, and all states have seen a sharp decline in the number of people who have been able to benefit from the program. Permanent reauthorization is necessary to ensure a safe way for people to get out of dangerous institutions and back to their own homes.

Confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett before the November elections could have dire consequences for disabled and aging people and their health care, based on the record of her decisions to date, and the upcoming cases on the Supreme Court docket. ADAPT demands that the appointment should not be rushed, but should be made by the incoming president.

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