

July 21, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we would like to express our strong support for S. 4100, *Supporting Children with Disabilities During COVID-19 Act*, introduced by Senators Chris Murphy (D-CT), Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD). In addition to providing critical funds for States under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, this bill would also provide \$55 million under the Assistive Technology (AT) Act to help address the increased need for assistive technology throughout the country due to COVID-19. Both are essential as States, districts and schools strive to meet the changing educational needs of students with disabilities in the coming school year.

The pandemic has created unanticipated and new barriers that need to be overcome so individuals can access the full breadth of delivery of direct services. An infusion of funds to the AT Act would support State and community programs that assure students with disabilities have access to and can acquire the assistive technology (AT) services they need to live, learn, and access education and services.

State AT Act programs operate in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and four territories and are available for persons with all types of disabilities, all ages, in all environments (education, employment, community living and information technology). State AT programs provide a continuum of services that increase the access to, and acquisition of assistive technology through state financing activities (such as financial loans, cooperative buy, funds of last resort, etc.), device reutilization (including recycling, repair, refurbishment and device exchange), device loan/borrowing and device demonstration services.

State and Territory AT Act Programs are uniquely positioned to serve all individuals with disabilities, including school-age children. The AT Act programs also help students with disabilities and support State Education Agencies during this time of remote learning by:

- Supporting the purchase of appropriate AT and adaptive equipment by aiding with AT assessments for students to identify the best match of AT for home or school learning environments;

- Providing training for, and support the use of, devices and equipment for both the student and parents for devices distributed to students either by the school or the devices and equipment purchased by an AT assessment conducted by a State AT Program;
- Aiding in the development of and ensure accessible work materials are provided to families and students during remote/digital learning periods;
- Developing guidance for the State Education Agency on universal technology supports;
- Providing training for school-based therapists to effectively deliver tele-practice to students;
- Offering AT and training to Ed Techs and other paraprofessionals working in new eLearning environments; and,
- Delivering information and referrals to parents who have disabilities so they can best assist the eLearning of their school-aged child at home (child could be general education or special education student).

We look forward to partnering with you to help move S. 4100 forward and ensure it is included in the next stimulus package being considered in the United States Senate.

Thank you again for your efforts to support State AT Act Programs so that States can assure students with disabilities have access to the AT they need when schools reopen.

Sincerely,

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs
 The Arc
 NASDSE
 Council for Exceptional Children
 Council of Administrators of Special Education
 National Association of Secondary School Principals
 National Down Syndrome Congress
 Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS)
 Learning Disabilities Association of America
 Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
 National PTA
 American Federation of Teachers
 New Hampshire Society for Technology in Education
 Family Centered Treatment Foundation (national)
 InnovateEDU
 Jefferson Education Exchange
 American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)
 National Summer Learning Association
 KIPP
 Virginia Society for Technology in Education Board of Directors
 National Center for Learning Disabilities
 American Psychological Association

cc: Senate HELP Committee, Senate Appropriations Committee