Testimony of the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

United States Senate Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies

FY 2023 Appropriations   
Administration for Community Living

State Councils on Developmental Disabilities

May 11, 2022

The National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD), a national membership organization for the State Councils on Developmental Disabilities (DD Councils), appreciates the opportunity to present this testimony. NACDD respectfully requests $88.48 million for the DD Councils within the Administration for Community Living (ACL) in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill, the same level included in the President’s FY23 budget.

We also respectfully request that the following report language be included in the Fiscal Year 2023 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Appropriations bill:

*Technical Assistance —The Committee instructs the Department to provide not less than $700,000 for technical assistance and training for the State Councils on Developmental Disabilities. In addition, the Committee encourages ACL to consult with Developmental Disabilities Act stakeholders prior to announcing opportunities for new technical assistance projects and to notify the Committee prior to releasing new funding opportunity announcements, grants, or contract awards with technical assistance funding.*

Authorized by the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act), DD Councils work collaboratively with the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities and the Protection and Advocacy Program for Developmental Disabilities, to assure that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families participate in the design of and have access to needed community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in all facets of community life, through culturally competent programs. Appointed by Governors and consisting of at least 60 percent of people with DD and their families, DD Councils assess problems or gaps in the intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) system and design innovative solutions that make real changes to social systems such as employment, transportation, education, healthcare, housing and more, to fully integrate people with I/DD into society.

The request for an increase in funding for FY2023 is supported by the steadily and rapidly increasing numbers of people with developmental disabilities who continue to lack comprehensive and coordinated support systems to meet specific needs for full community inclusion. During the COVID-19 pandemic many people with developmental disabilities lost the assistance provided by families and other informal supports and people with disabilities disproportionately experienced loss of employment. Demand for services even after the pandemic has remained significantly higher than before the pandemic.

DD Councils direct resources through partnerships with local non-profits, businesses, and state and local governments, to overcome obstacles to community living for people with I/DD. States and territories rely on DD Councils to turn fragmented approaches into innovative and cost-effective strategies to increase the percentage of individuals with I/DD who become independent, self-sufficient, and integrated into the community. Examples of DD Council projects include partnerships to increase competitive and integrated employment, campaigns promoting access to qualified direct support workers, programs for successfully transitioning to independent living, advocacy for access to affordable housing, training to build leadership and advocacy skills, and more. DD Council members also provide a critical and unique role in educating state and local policymakers by directly participating in the design of state and local government-funded supports and services affecting their lives.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, DD Councils provided life-saving access to information, resources, and support to people with I/DD and their families. The past two years underscored the critical role of the DD Councils to meet the needs of people with I/DD so they can live safely in the community and free from discrimination. States have called on DD Councils to create life-saving solutions to problems faced by people with I/DD during the pandemic. Federal agencies and states have looked to DD Councils to bridge public health communication gaps with the I/DD community; advocate for non-discrimination in health care; promote immunization; distribute personal protective equipment; support access telehealth; and more. This funding request reflects the increased need for direct resources through partnerships with local non-profits, businesses and state and local governments, to provide innovative and cost-effective strategies so more people with I/DD can become independent, self-sufficient, and integrated into the community.

Thank you for consideration of our request. For more information, please contact Erin Prangley at eprangley@nacdd.org, (818)456-6517, National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities, 1825 K Street, N.W., Suite 600, Washington, D.C.