



Dear Members of 118<sup>th</sup> Congress,

On behalf of the 135 undersigned Jewish national, state, and local organizations, we thank you for the significant bipartisan progress made in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress to support independence for people with disabilities. **As the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress commences, we urge you to continue to prioritize policies that promote inclusion and accessibility and empower people with disabilities to lead lives of greater independence and economic stability.**

According to the Centers for Disease Control, [61 million adults](#) in the United States -- one in four -- have a disability. Every February, the Jewish community comes together for Jewish Disability Advocacy Day (JDAD) to raise awareness and foster acceptance and inclusion of people with disabilities and mental health conditions – and to advocate for policies that promote independence and inclusion. Jewish text commands us, "You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind" (Leviticus 19:14) and "Do not separate yourself from the community" (Pirkei Avot 2:5). Stumbling blocks come in many forms: unequal access or subpar educational and employment opportunities, lack of accessible housing and transportation, inability to access health care, reduced opportunities for community involvement and independent living, discrimination, and stigma. These teachings remind us that there is still much work to be done to reach full inclusion for all people in our society.

We are grateful for the passage of prior JDAD priorities during the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, including the ABLE Age Adjustment Act, extending the Medicaid Money Follows the Person program, and increasing funding for the Social Security Administration to improve timely processing of disability benefit claims. We now urge you to continue this progress by prioritizing:

### **Promoting Opportunities for Economic Independence**

People with disabilities are [more than twice as likely](#) to live in poverty as those without disabilities due to educational and employment opportunities that significantly limit their earning potential, while outdated safety net policies trap many people with disabilities in poverty. Further, People of Color, [particularly African Americans](#), are more likely to have a disability and the difficulties they experience in living with a disability are compounded by higher rates of economic insecurity due to [disparities](#) in economic opportunity. We urge you to promote bipartisan opportunities for economic independence like updating Supplemental Security Income (SSI) asset limits and allowing beneficiaries to retain more in savings for emergencies without jeopardizing their benefits.

## **Increasing Opportunities to Live Independently in the Community**

To increase opportunities for individuals with disabilities to live in the community, rather than in costly institutions, we urge you to expand upon existing programs that promote the ability of people with disabilities to live more independently with appropriate support, including investing in additional resources and training for direct care workers.

## **Protecting and Advancing Accessibility and Inclusion**

In the 30 years since enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the landmark civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life has proven to be a vital tool in removing barriers and improving access to employment, school, transportation, community spaces, and more, but there is much left to be done. We look to our elected officials to protect the ADA and enact further legislation that will break down the remaining barriers to promote full, equitable access.

## **Removing Educational Barriers for Children with Disabilities**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) established that all children with disabilities have a federally protected right to a free, appropriate public education tailored to their individual needs in the least restrictive environment possible. Even as schools are required to fulfill the IDEA mandate, special education programs remain severely underfunded. We urge Congress to fulfill its original promise to children with disabilities and fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Inspired by our tradition, we join across the Jewish community on JDAD to ask that the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress commit to passing bipartisan legislation that addresses the needs of people with disabilities, empowering them to achieve greater economic security and independence. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Union for Reform Judaism  
Jewish Federations of North America  
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies

## **National**

ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal  
Ameinu  
Anti-Defamation League  
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action  
Central Conference of American Rabbis  
Early Childhood Educators of Reform Judaism  
Hillel International  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Jewish Family Service-San Diego, CA  
Jewish Labor Committee  
Jewish Veg  
Jewish Women International

Jewish Youth Climate Movement  
jGirls+ Magazine  
KAVOD  
Keshet  
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger  
Men of Reform Judaism  
National Council of Jewish Women  
Rabbinical Assembly  
Reconstructing Judaism  
RespectAbility  
Society for Humanistic Judaism  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
The Workers Circle  
Women of Reform Judaism

**State and Local**

Baltimore Jewish Council  
Buffalo Jewish Federation  
Buffalo Jewish Community Relations Council  
Cincinnati Jewish Community Relations Council  
CJE SeniorLife  
Congregation Leyv Ha-Ir ~ Heart of the City  
Congregation Shir Shalom- Buffalo, NY  
Congregation Shir Shalom- Williamsville, NY  
Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies  
Geshet Human Services  
Greater Miami Jewish Federation  
Hebrew Educational Society  
Hillel at the University of Wisconsin  
Hillel of Buffalo  
ikar  
JARC  
JCRC for Tucson & Southern Arizona  
Jewish Alliance of Greater Rhode Island  
Jewish Community Action  
Jewish Community Center of Greater Buffalo  
Jewish Community Federation of Richmond  
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington  
Jewish Community Relations Council of Jewish Silicon Valley  
Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Omaha  
Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Rochester, NY  
Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of San Antonio  
Jewish Family & Children's Service of Greater Boston  
Jewish Family & Children's Service of Greater Philadelphia

Jewish Family and Career Services of Atlanta  
Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis  
Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis  
Jewish Family and Children's Services of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties  
Jewish Family Service of Atlantic & Cape May Counties  
Jewish Family Service- Denver, CO  
Jewish Family Service of Greater Dallas  
Jewish Family Service of Greater New Orleans  
Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles  
Jewish Family Service of Orange County, NY  
Jewish Family Service of San Diego  
Jewish Family Service of the Lehigh Valley  
Jewish Family Service St. Paul  
Jewish Family Services- Greensboro, NC  
Jewish Family Services of Greater Charlotte  
Jewish Family Services of Rochester  
Jewish Family Services- Milwaukee, WI  
Jewish Federation in the Heart of New Jersey  
Jewish Federation of Chicago  
Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor  
Jewish Federation of Greater Harrisburg  
Jewish Federation of Greater Indianapolis  
Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ  
Jewish Federation of Greater Nashville  
Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans  
Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia  
Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh  
Jewish Federation of Greater Portland  
Jewish Federation of Greater Rochester, NY  
Jewish Federation of Greater Rockford  
Jewish Federation of Greater Toledo  
Jewish Federation of Louisville  
Jewish Federation of Madison  
Jewish Federation of Northern New Jersey  
Jewish Federation of Ocean County  
Jewish Federation of Omaha  
Jewish Federation of San Antonio and its Jewish Community Relations Council  
Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County  
Jewish Federation of Southern New Jersey  
Jewish Federation of Springfield, IL  
Jewish Federation of the Berkshires  
Jewish Federation of the Bluegrass  
Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley  
Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts

Jewish Philanthropies of Southern Arizona  
Jewish Social Service Agency of Greater Washington  
Jewish Vocational Service of Metrowest NJ  
Joan and Stanford Alexander Jewish Family Service, Houston  
JUF  
National Council of Jewish Women - San Antonio  
National Council of Jewish Women Greater Houston  
National Council of Jewish Women St. Louis  
National Council of Jewish Women WA State  
National Council of Jewish Women, Austin  
National Council of Jewish Women, Louisville Section  
National Council of Jewish Women, Nashville Section  
National Council of Jewish Women, Sacramento  
National Council of Jewish Women, West Morris Section  
National Council of Jewish Women/Cleveland  
National Council of Jewish Women -Peninsula Section  
NCJW Chicago North Shore  
NCJW South Cook Section (Illinois)  
North Louisiana Jewish Federation  
Or Hadash, A Reconstructionist Congregation  
Shalom Austin  
St. Paul Jewish Federation  
Temple Beth Zion  
Temple Beth-El, South Bend, Indiana  
Temple Emanu-EL Sisterhood Birmingham, AL  
Temple Sinai- Middletown, NY  
The Birmingham Jewish Federation  
The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington  
The Reconstructionist Synagogue of the North Shore  
The Tampa JCCs and Federation  
The Youngstown Area Jewish Federation  
UJA-Federation of NY  
Wisconsin Jewish Conference  
Women of Temple Chai