A Time for Unity
To Preserve Essential Protections and the Rights of People with Disabilities

We come together today as a coalition of national organizations who advocate for people with disabilities and their families. It is no secret that there are many policies on which we have historically and vigorously disagreed. But we are united in our efforts to preserve long-established rights and policies that affect millions of people with disabilities, because despite our differences, we all agree with the fundamental principle that people with disabilities should be able to access the services they need and to live the lives they choose. Between extraordinary cuts to Medicaid and the recent memorandum from the U.S. Department of Justice that reverses course on the government's decades-long support for the right to live in the community, people with disabilities are more vulnerable to harm than they have been in decades.

Public Law No. 119-21, the reconciliation bill introduced as HR 1- the One Big Beautiful Bill Act which was passed by Congress in 2025, is expected to result in nearly $1 trillion in reduced Medicaid funding, the largest cut in the Medicaid program's 60-year history. For people with all types of disabilities, Medicaid is a critically important lifeline across their lifespan. For many people with disabilities, Medicaid is their only source of coverage for the services they need to support routine activities throughout their lives.

We are at a crisis moment. All Medicaid long-term services and supports are at risk. Significantly reduced funding to states--together with the government's efforts to paint home and community-based services as rife with fraud--are pressuring states to reduce these essential services. The likely results will include loss of human dignity, financial strain to individuals and families, and homelessness, by needlessly driving many Americans with disabilities who could live successfully in their own communities with support into emergency rooms and psychiatric wards, nursing facilities and other institutional settings, including jails and other forensic facilities.

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office estimated that the cuts in Public Law No. 119-21 will cause about 7.5 million Americans to lose Medicaid coverage. The federal government's new rule implementing the Medicaid work requirement is expected to increase that number by another 1.8 million, or nearly 25%, if implemented. While there is an exemption to the work requirement for people who are medically frail, large numbers of people with disabilities are expected to lose coverage due to the complexities of proving that they meet or are exempt from the work requirement. For those people, loss of Medicaid coverage will be devastating.

The Justice Department's actions similarly threaten the rights and choices of people with disabilities. On June 18th, the Department's Office of Legal Counsel issued an opinion stating that

neither the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) nor Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require states to provide services to people with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate. The opinion reversed the government's longstanding position that guided its enforcement work over decades and across Administrations. It is inconsistent with long-settled federal case law, including the Supreme Court's decision in Olmstead v. L.C. It effectively invites states to institutionalize people with disabilities who do not want or need institutionalization.

We support the rights of individuals with disabilities and their families to make informed choices about residential options, treatment services, and other daily activities that meet their needs in the most integrated setting appropriate. We support the right of people with disabilities to live fulfilling lives with self-determination and dignity. We also support their right to oppose placement into settings they do not want and that do not meet their needs.

The integration mandate and the Olmstead decision are crucially important, and the government's retreat from enforcing these rights will cause untold harms. These actions threaten all Americans with disabilities, including people experiencing psychiatric, intellectual, and physical disabilities. They would deny critical opportunities to choose where to live and receive services.

We call on all members of the disability community to join together and speak with one voice to demand the reversal of these cuts to Medicaid and to support the rights of people with disabilities, and their families, to choose the options that best suit them throughout the course of their lives. And we call on all Americans to demand that Congress and the Administration adopt policies that uphold the rights, dignity, well-being and community participation of people with disabilities and rescind those policies that undermine these principles.

This statement was created by The Arc of the United States, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Center for Public Representation, The National Health Law Program, and VOR – A Voice of Reason

November 9, 2026