

# PROTECT DISABILITY RIGHTS. PROTECT ACL



## **Disability Network Warns: Eliminating ACL Will Endanger Lives, Erode Rights, and Collapse Community Supports for 1 in 4 Americans**

On April 16, 2025, a 64-page draft budget proposal from Trump’s administration’s Office of Management and Budget (OMB), dated April 10, 2025, was leaked and became public.

The document, known as a “passback,” included proposed major funding cuts to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Among those cuts are the complete elimination of large parts of the Administration for Community Living (ACL).

The National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD), the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), and the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) stand unified in strong opposition to the President’s proposed elimination of the Administration for Community Living (ACL).

This move does not represent a budget cut or a “reduction in bureaucracy and inefficiency”. The elimination of ACL and many of its programs is a direct and deliberate attack on people with disabilities, their families, and the systems that protect their rights, health, and independence.

In 1975, Congress enacted a more comprehensive Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, which included the formation of:

- State Councils on Developmental Disabilities (DD Councils)

- Protection and Advocacy (P&A) systems
- University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs)

These programs were designed to empower states, ensure civil rights protections, and support systems change, all of which appealed across the aisle, ensuring bipartisan commitment.

These programs effectively form the DD Network, which is funded by and housed under ACL funds and houses the DD Network.

In the last year alone:

- UCEDDs provided essential services to over 1.3 million individuals, and trained more than 620,000 community providers, families, and self-advocates across all 50 states.
- 56 Governor-appointed DD Councils invested in over 900 projects that assisted people with disabilities to become independent and self-reliant; and supported hundreds of community-based programs that build integrated education, employment, and housing opportunities.
- P&As protected the health, safety and well-being of more than 11.5 million individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the U.S. including U.S. territories, D.C. and in the four corners through systemic advocacy, individual assistance, and monitoring and investigating abuse and neglect in institutions and group facilities.

These aren't abstract numbers. They represent real people who depend on these programs for healthcare access, educational support, civil rights protections, community living, and self-determination.

One in four Americans have a disability. The proposed elimination of ACL threatens vital programs that directly support individuals with disabilities, older Americans, and their families. Additionally, eliminating the agency undermines decades of progress and puts people at greater risk of institutionalization, isolation, and neglect.

If this proposal is adopted and enacted, it would:

- Cut off vital services to people with disabilities and their families.
- Eliminate training pipelines for the disability workforce, removing workers who pay taxes and contribute to their community.
- Slash support for education, healthcare, and employment systems.
- Increase unnecessary institutionalization and erode civil rights.

Each partner in the DD Network has made significant strides for disability rights, independently and collaboratively.

DD Councils are at the forefront of many state legislative wins that promote community integration such as post-secondary education programs, transportation, elimination of subminimum wages, and more.

P&As work to implement the U.S. Supreme Court's 1999 decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.*, which requires states to eliminate unnecessary segregation of people with disabilities, and to ensure that they receive services in the most integrated setting possible. They also monitor and investigate abuse and neglect in institutions and in the community, oversee access to housing, transportation, employment services, assistive technology, voting rights, and more. P&As also provide education support by implementing and enforcing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The UCEDDs have played key roles in every major disability initiative over the past four decades. They are the knowledge engine of the Developmental Disabilities network across the country. Without UCEDDs, people with disabilities, members of their families, state and local government agencies, and community providers will lose a vital connection to a program that produces impactful research, services, and training.

At the same time, Congress is debating cutting \$880 billion from Medicaid that would directly impact people with disabilities, older Americans, and others who rely on this resource for everyday life to live, work, play, and worship in their community. If ACL is eliminated, it would increase the risk of institutionalization. Community living is more cost effective and costs one-third of the amount than institutions.

ACL's formation in 2012 was a result of bipartisan effort. It increased efficiency and collaboration among programs that support older Americans and people with disabilities, two populations in the country that have similar needs for services and supports.

Eliminating ACL and its programs is not fiscal responsibility or efficiency. It sends a clear and dangerous message: that the federal government no longer values people with disabilities or their right to participate fully in society.

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