

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



CHAIRMAN Special Committee on Aging

The REAADI (Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion) for Disasters Act

Why do we need the REAADI for Disasters Act?

As the climate crisis worsens, disasters are increasing in both intensity and frequency across the Nation, threatening all communities. Although the 54 million older adults and 61 million people with disabilities living in the U.S. are at higher risk of dying during disasters than others, they are often left behind and excluded from the complex planning needed to stay safe during and after emergency events. Disaster management succeeds when all levels of public and private life come together across federal, tribal, territorial, state, local and non-governmental agencies to address the diverse needs of all. Without a place at the table for disability and aging leaders and dedicated training and resources for agencies, the groups at highest risk are often forgotten. Coordinated planning and response is necessary to explicitly address the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and others with access and functional needs—such as language barriers, limited financial resources, or lack of transportation—as the Nation prepares for, responds to, recovers from, and mitigates disasters.

What will the REAADI for Disasters Act do?

REAADI will ensure there is a strong disability and older adult voice in the preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation of disasters. The REAADI for Disasters Act would:

- Establish a National Commission on Disability Rights and Disasters to study the needs of people with disabilities, older adults, and others with access and functional needs and make recommendations for best practices at the local, state, tribal, and federal levels for ensuring older adults and people with disabilities are included in all aspects of disaster preparedness, including:
 - accessible communication,
 - protection of civil rights,
 - accessible transportation and evacuation, and
 - accessible health and medical services.
- Create a national network of centers focused on training and technical assistance, as well as research, to assist states and localities to better involve and support people with disabilities and older adults during and after disasters;
- Direct the Department of Justice to review the spending of disaster funds by federal agencies and states to ensure funds have been spent in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Covered activities include emergency shelters, services, and reconstruction of buildings;
- Create a competitive grant program to pilot strategies for greater inclusion of people with disabilities and older adults in disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation;
- Prevent the development or implementation of potentially discriminatory crisis standards of care policies when resources are scarce during a disaster; and
- Require the Department of Justice to examine how the civil rights of people with disabilities and older adults are or are not upheld during and following disasters.

Cosponsors: Senator Gillibrand, Senator Warren, Senator Duckworth, Senator Blumenthal, Senator Markey, Senator Wyden, Senator Sanders, Senator Welch, Senator Smith

Endorsing Organizations: *AI HR Consulting (Cuttack, Odisha, India), ADA Legacy Project, All Kinds Accessibility Consulting, The Alliance for Citizen Directed Supports, American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), American Council for the Blind, American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), American Physical Therapy Association, Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL), Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), Autism Society of America, Autistic People of Color Fund, Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN), Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network (AWN), Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Behavior Momentum Group, Blooms Connect, Catholic Health Association, CBID Network (Pakistan), Center for American Progress (CAP), Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation, CommunicationFIRST, Disability Awareness Training, Disability Inclusive Development Programs and Services (DIDEPAS), Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund, Disaster Accountability Project, El Centro Para Todos, Epilepsy Foundation, Fight For Right (Ukraine), Global Alliance for Disaster Resource Acceleration (GADRA), Global Disability Inclusion, HelpAge USA, Justice in Aging, Kintsugi Consulting, LLC, Little Lobbyists, National ADAPT, National Association for Rights Protection and Advocacy, National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities, National Association of Statewide Independent Living Councils, National Council on Disability, National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), National Down Syndrome Congress, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Network of Occupational Therapy Practitioners with Disabilities & Supporters, Not Dead Yet, OT Leaders and Legacies Society, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Partners for Access LLC, The Resiliency Initiative, Sins Invalid, Spina Bifida Association, The Arc of the United States, The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies, TASH, Touch the Future, Inc., United Cerebral Palsy, United States International Council on Disabilities, US Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (USSAAC), Veterans for Peace, World Institute on Disability (WID), XTRAGLOBEX GROUPS, INC*

State and Territorial Organizations: **Alabama:** Disability Rights and Resources, **Alaska:** Statewide Independent Living Council of Alaska, **California:** ALCO VOAD (Alameda County Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters), California Disaster Strategies Coalition, Community Emergency Response Volunteers of the Monterey Peninsula, Community Access Center, Dayle McIntosh Center for the Disabled, Disability Policy Consultant, Green Party of Santa Clara County CA, Momentum Agencies, Placer Independent Resource Services, Service Center for Independent Life, Tri-County Independent Living, The Center for Independent Living, Inc., **Colorado:** Atlantis Community, Inc., Center for Independence, Inc., Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition, **Connecticut:** Advocacy Unlimited, Inc., Connecticut Legal Rights Project, CT Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance, CT State Independent Living Council, Independence Northwest, Independence Unlimited, **Delaware:** ADAPT Delaware, The Freedom Center for Independent Living, Inc., **Florida:** Disability Rights Florida, Florida Independent Living Council (FILC), **Georgia:** DQIA: Disabled Queers In ACTION!, Georgia ADAPT (NDN & Roll to the Poll), Statewide Independent Living Council, GA, Walton Options, **Hawaii:** Aloha Independent Living Hawaii, Dept of Health - Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities, Oahu, **Idaho:** Disability Action Center - Northwest, Living Independence Network Corporation, **Illinois:** Cure SMA, Illinois-Iowa Center for Independent Living, Illinois Valley Center for Independent Living, IMPACT CIL, Spoonie Media, The Statewide Independent Living Council of Illinois, Progress Center for Independent Living, **Indiana:** Daly Law LLC, Indiana Statewide Independent Living Council (INSILC), **Iowa:** Central Iowa Center for Independent Living, The Disability Caucus of the Iowa Democratic Party, #UpgradeMedicaid, with Iowa Disability League, **Kansas:** Kansas ADAPT, **Kentucky:** Center for Accessible Living (Bowling Greene), Center For Accessible Living (Murray), **Louisiana:** Louisiana Democratic Party Disability Caucus, Resources for Independent Living, Inc., Rev Up of Washington Parish, **Massachusetts:** MassADAPT, Tee Stock Pediatric OT, **Maryland:** Accessible Resources for Independence Incorporated, **Michigan:** Disability Network Southwest Michigan, Michigan Disability Rights Coalition, Michigan Rehabilitation Association, **Mississippi:** Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities, **Missouri:** Gateway Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America, Kansas City Missouri Health Dept Public Health Preparedness Program, Rural Advocate for Independent Living, Inc., Wake Up Phelps County Coalition, **Montana:** ADAPT Montana, 373 Consulting LLC, Living Independently for Today & Tomorrow (LIFTT), Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities, University of Montana, Summit Independent Living, **North Carolina:** Disability Rights North Carolina, Disability Rights & Resources, El Centro Para Todos, NC Statewide Independent Living Council, North Carolina East Coast ADAPT, **New Jersey:** Alliance Center for Independence, Art House Productions, Center for Independent Living of South Jersey, The Collaborative for Citizen Directed Supports-New Jersey, DAWN Center for Independent Living, DIAL - Center for Independent Living, Latino Action Network, New

*Jersey Disability Action Committee, New Jersey Disability Collective, NJ Statewide Independent Living Council, Progressive Center for Independent Living (PCIL), Project Freedom, Inc., SPAN Parent Advocacy Network, Spina Bifida Resource Center, **New York:** Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc., ADAPT Capital Region, Downstate New York ADAPT, Finger Lakes Independence Center, Ithaca, NY, Long Island Center for Independent Living, Inc. (LICIL), Niagara University Disability Awareness Training, **Oregon:** East Oregon Center for Independent Living (EOCIL), Lane Independent Living Alliance (LILA), MindFreedom International, Oregon Statewide Independent Living Council, **Pennsylvania:** Center for Independent Living of Central Pennsylvania, Disability Pride PA, Disabled in Action of Pennsylvania, Liberty Resources, Inc. (LRI), North Central PA ADAPT, PA ADAPT, PA Council on Independent Living, Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council, Philly ADAPT, Roads to Freedom Center for Independent Living (RTFCIL) of North Central PA, Values Into Action-Pennsylvania, **Puerto Rico:** Coalición de Coaliciones Pro Personas sin Hogar de PR, Inc., Movimiento para el Alcance de Vida Independiente (MAVI), Puerto Rico University Center on Developmental Disabilities (PRUCEDD), **South Carolina:** Able South Carolina, **Texas:** ADAPT of Texas, All Wheels Up, Gulf Coast ADAPT, Family to Family Network, Personal Attendant Coalition of Texas, Texas Democrats with Disabilities Caucus, **Vermont:** Vermont Center for Independent Living, Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights, **Virginia:** Blue Ridge Independent Living Center, The disAbility Resource Center of the Rappahannock Area, Inc., ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia (ECNV), ForwardWorks Consulting, Resources for Independent Living, Inc., **Washington:** Center for Independence (CFI), Lake Forest Park Citizens' Commission, PAVE, Washington ADAPT, **Wisconsin:** Access to Independence , Independence First, Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers, Inc.*

Section by Section Summary

Sections 1 to 4 – Title, Findings, Purpose, and Definitions

- Describes inequitable barriers older adults and people with disabilities face during disasters and the need to include these groups in disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation.
- Creates a more expansive definition of “disaster” and adds definitions for “visitability” and “public health emergency.”

Section 5 – Use of Disaster Response Funds

- Requires advisory committees to include individuals with disabilities and older adults.
- Requires contractors receiving funds to comply with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Requires facilities and services provided through response funds to be accessible to older adults and people with disabilities.
- Clarifies that states may contract with Centers for Independent Living to provide services and supports for people with disabilities in all phases of disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation.

Section 6 – Training, Technical Assistance, and Research Disability and Disaster Centers

- Provides grants to eligible entities to create Disability Training and Technical Assistance Centers.
- Requires Center advisory councils be composed of a majority of people with disabilities or older adults.
- Prioritizes grant applicants with experience conducting inclusive disaster management, expertise in anti-bias training, expertise in universal design, and demonstrated use of measurable collaboration and partnership strategies with governmental and non-governmental organizations.
- Outlines activities including hiring personnel with expertise in civil rights, staff training, creating partnerships, creating standards to build or rebuild accessible, affordable housing, establishing universal design and accessibility standards, and conducting research.

Section 7 – Projects of National Significance

- Establishes a program to examine specific issues related to increasing involvement of people with disabilities and older adults in the planning and response to disasters and identifying strategies for reducing deaths, injuries, and losses from disasters to those groups.

Section 8 – Crisis Standards of Care

- Prevents jurisdictions from developing or implementing potentially discriminatory crisis standards of care policies when resources are constrained during a disaster.

Section 9 – National Commission on Disability Rights and Disasters

- Requires the Commission to create plans for federal agencies to ensure people with disabilities and older adults are included in all aspects of disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation.
- Requires the Commission to create a plan for continuation of a council or other entity to provide guidance to federal agencies.

Section 9 – Review of Department of Justice Settlement Agreements

- Requires DOJ to create an oversight Committee to review all Americans with Disabilities Act settlement agreements related to disaster response activities for the years 2005 to 2017.

Section 10 – GAO Report on Past Use of Disaster Funds

- Requires the GAO to conduct a study reviewing federal funding used to recover from Superstorm Sandy and Hurricanes Harvey and Maria to determine if funds expended met the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act.