

URGENT ACTION ALERT!

Tell Congress to Protect Programs
for People with Disabilities



Protect Programs for People with Disabilities

This document explains how changes in the proposed federal budget will affect people with disabilities and how to take action.

Words to Know

Congress	A group of elected leaders who make laws and decide how the U.S. government spends money.
Federal Budget	A plan for how the U.S. government will spend money each year.
Congressional District	A part of a state that elects one person to represent them in Congress.
Advocacy	Speaking up for yourself or others to make change.
Independence	Being able to make choices and live life in your own way.
Program	A service or support that helps people with things like housing or health care.
Cuts	When the government takes away money from a program.
Self-advocacy	When a person with a disability speaks up for their own needs and rights.

Call to Action

URGENT: Your Advocacy Works, Keep Pushing

Thank you to the Congressional members who listened to the call of advocates, allies, and people with disabilities across the country with the previous federal budget. Congress protected vital programs for people with developmental disabilities in Ohio. However, we are not done, and our advocacy continues. This year the President's budget makes cuts to these programs yet again. The House still must vote on the federal budget and cuts to programs including the Ohio State University Nisonger Center, The University of Cincinnati Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, and Disability Rights Ohio are still a real possibility. It is critical that the House does not move forward with the President's budget!

What's At Stake?

Drastic cuts or total elimination of programs created by Congress that protect the rights of people with developmental disabilities and ensure independence within the community. Congress does not typically accept the budget without making changes. However, the House could still pass the proposal to slash funding to these critical programs serving people with developmental disabilities, which include:

- **Disability Rights Ohio** (investigates abuse and neglect, helps people with disabilities exercise their rights, advocates for access to independent living in the community, helps students stay in school and receive the necessary services to be successful, and access services funded through Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities)
- **The Ohio State University Nisonger Center** (supports people with developmental disabilities across the lifespan through early intervention, clinical and dental care, specialized dual diagnosis services, and post-secondary education programs, while advancing research, training the workforce across disciplines—including through LEND—and strengthening community-based systems and supports)
- **The University of Cincinnati Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCCEDD)** (works with and for people with developmental disabilities across the lifespan through strengthening community-based systems, implementing services and supports, sharing information and resources, while also advancing community-based research with direct impact on people with disabilities, as well as conducting training and education for the future healthcare and disability workforce across disciplines—including through the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and other Disabilities (LEND)).

Congress created these programs over 50 years ago when efforts were made to expand services for people with disabilities in the community, improve lives, and ensure independence. These programs have supported people with disabilities to live independently in their communities without the fear of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

If These Cuts Are Made over 40,000 people with disabilities will lose access to these vital programs. The impact is greater for those who could access these services. Individuals and families utilize these programs in every Congressional district and people with disabilities rely on them for innovation, self-advocacy, and legal support.

Email your Representative to Congress today using the form below. Tell them to protect these programs. We encourage you to customize this message to share your personal story.

Tell them to **fully fund all disability programs and reject any cuts**. Every program matters. Every person matters.

Here are some helpful questions to think about when you craft your message:

- *Have you ever contacted and used services from these programs?*
- *Why do you think these programs are important?*
- *What would happen if these programs no longer existed?*

Email Script

Dear Member of Congress,

I'm emailing to ask you to follow the decision of Congress last year to fully fund all federal disability programs. Disability Rights Ohio, the OSU Nisonger Center, and the University of Cincinnati Center of Excellence are essential to the health, safety, and independence of people with disabilities in Ohio.

Congress created these programs decades ago to protect the rights of people with disabilities and help them live independently in their communities.

Eliminating them would hurt more than 40,000 people in Ohio alone.

Please don't turn your back on people with disabilities. Every program matters. Every person matters. Protect these programs.