

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 21, 2025

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Capito and Ranking Member Baldwin:

As you and your colleagues work on the fiscal year (FY) 2026 appropriations bills, we respectfully request that you fund critical programs known as the Model Systems program and the Model Systems Knowledge Translational Center (MSKTC), housed at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR). Specifically, we request that you appropriate \$150 million for NIDILRR so the Model Systems program can continue to provide multidisciplinary care through the entirety of the rehabilitation process—from emergency services at the time of injury through a person's return to full participation in the community—for people with spinal cord injury (SCI), traumatic brain injury (TBI) and burn injury. Despite its vital importance, the Model Systems program has not seen an increase in funding since 2006.

Almost six million people in the United States are living with SCI, TBI and burn injuries. These individuals require specialized, coordinated care to rehabilitate from injury and fully reintegrate into their communities. There are 18 SCI, 16 TBI and four Burn Injury Model Systems across the United States. For decades, Model Systems centers have built a national capacity for high-quality treatment and research to improve long-term functional, vocational, cognitive and quality-of-life outcomes for individuals living with SCI, TBI and burn injuries. The MSKTC also plays an essential role by sharing expert rehabilitation information with a wide variety of national and international stakeholders, including servicemembers and civilian personnel, individuals living with chronic conditions or disabilities, healthcare professionals, caregivers and family members.

NIDILRR needs additional funding to expand its Model Systems program and the capacity of the MSKTC to support the growing population of individuals living with SCI, TBI and burn injuries. This additional funding will help patients across the Nation access customized rehabilitation programs so that they can return to and participate in their communities. We urge you to consider the tremendous benefits of a sustained investment in this program for millions of Americans.

Sincerely,

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