FACT SHEET
BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

SUMMARY

Individuals with autism and other disabilities depend on federal funding for programs that support them at home, at work, and in the community, including Medicaid, Medicare, Society Security income supports and discretionary programs that support education, employment, family supports, professional development and research. Rising health care costs, changes in demographics, and recent tax cuts are reducing revenues and squeezing discretionary funding available to support individuals and families in need. Too many are languishing on waiting lists for services and supports in the community. Federal fiscal policy should be used address the crises facing people with disabilities and their families.

CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

The House of Representatives approved its Fiscal Year 2020 bill for the Departments of Health and Human Services and Education (L-HHS-ED) on June 19. The House bill proposed modest increases for programs important to the autism community, including early intervention, special education, employment training, and family supports. Even with the increases, however, the total funding for all programs covered in the L-HHS-ED bill would be just three percent above what it was a decade ago in inflation-adjusted terms.

Late in March, the Senate Budget Committee adopted a five-year budget resolution that adheres to the austere 2011 Budget Control Act spending caps. These levels are not binding, however, and there is some hope that congressional leaders will reach a new bipartisan deal to raise the caps. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, without a new deal, non-defense discretionary programs would be cut by $55 billion and defense by $71 billion in FY20, compared to FY19 levels.

There is significant concern about the impacts of another government “shut-down” if Congress and the Administration cannot come to agreement on final appropriations for FY 2020. When the federal budget process breaks down, it disrupts public health and human services with direct harm to individuals with disabilities and other vulnerable populations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Autism Society recommends Congress:

- Strengthen, not weaken, vital entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, SSI, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and SNAP (food stamps);
- Promote cost-effectiveness when such efforts do no harm to our constituents and allow them to live as independently as possible in the community;
- Eliminate or raise spending caps that impact discretionary programs that support people with disabilities and replace them with a budget that includes revenue increases and no further cuts to programs that support people with disabilities and their families;

Autism Society, 2019
• Address the significant unmet needs by expanding the federal government’s investment in people with disabilities to enable them to live and work as independently as possible in the community;
• Ensure that eligibility for services and benefits is not restricted and that the level of services and benefits for entitlement programs (such as Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security) is not reduced or limited to achieve budget cuts;
• Reform tax policy in a manner that raises sufficient revenues to finance the federal government’s role in providing essential supports, services, and benefits for people with disabilities and their families over the lifespan.

**Committees of Jurisdiction**

House and Senate Budget and Appropriations Committees