

DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION RESEARCH COALITION

1501 M STREET, N.W. SUITE 700 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

December 22, 2017

The Honorable Eric D. Hargan
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Re: CDC Use of Certain Words in FY 2019 Budget Documents

Dear Acting Secretary Hargan:

The undersigned members of the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Coalition (DRRC) write to express our concerns regarding media reports involving directives at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) not to use certain words in FY 2019 budget documents and justifications, words such as “evidence-based,” “science-based,” “vulnerable,” “diversity,” and “entitlement,” to name a few.

The DRRC is a coalition of nearly 40 national non-profit organizations committed to improving the science of rehabilitation and disability. The DRRC seeks to maximize the return on the federal investment in rehabilitation and disability research with the goal of optimizing the health and function and quality of life of persons with injuries, illnesses, disabilities, and chronic conditions.

As a coalition interested in research of disability, rehabilitation, and independent living research, we believe the unrestricted use of these words is critical to the integrity of the science that CDC and other federal agencies support, fund, and rely upon. Placing unnecessary and unreasonable restrictions on their use in budget documents and in other federal initiatives undermines the importance of evidence and science in policymaking and programmatic decision-making.

In addition, words such as “vulnerable,” “diversity,” and “entitlement” are all relevant when discussing disability and disability populations. Were these terms never to be used in CDC or other agency budgetary justifications, there is a likelihood that reductions in funding and programmatic activities in the areas of rehabilitation and disability would be the result.

For these reasons, we urge you to ensure that CDC and all federal agencies under your purview are free to use the language that best describes the policies and programs that are in the best interests of the American people and that promote evidence-based science on rehabilitation and disability research and related programs.

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Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

Academy of Spinal Cord Injury Professionals
American Academy of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
American Association on Health and Disability
American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine
American Physical Therapy Association
Association of Academic Physiatrists
Association of Rehabilitation Nurses
Lakeshore Foundation
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
United Spinal Association

Cc: The Honorable Mick Mulvaney, Director, OMB
Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald, Director, CDC