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## BE A VOICE SUMMARY: SERVICES TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

*All Be A Voice Health and Human Service Advocacy Toolkit sections are on the advocacy page listed on the bottom of this summary.*

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### BACKGROUND:

- July 26, 2020, marked the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which bans discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, public accommodation, public services, transportation, and telecommunications. But the fight for disability justice did not end with the ADA: ableist norms, policy pushback, and underfunding persist, all while one-in-four Americans live with a disability. If people with disabilities were a formally recognized minority group, they would be the largest minority group in the country.
- Disability advocacy must center on issue intersections of persons with disabilities and persons of color, persons who are poor and have less access to education, incarcerated persons, and veterans. Additionally, non-elderly adults with disabilities on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are among those most severely affected by the extreme shortage of affordable rental housing in the U.S.
- Disability rights, inclusion, and advocacy are an important focus in the UCC. In the 1970s, the Rev. Harold Wilke and the Rev. Virginia Kreyer were early leaders in disability justice advocacy.
- **CURRENTLY:**
- The [UCC's Disabilities Ministries](#) provides education, conferences like [Widening the Welcome](#), spirituality [resources](#), and leadership from people with disabilities and allies.
- The COVID-19 crisis highlights the inequities inherent in current society. Protections for those with disabilities need to be included as we map out how to navigate the public health crisis and the economic crisis, including the investment in home and community-based services and increased funding for Medicaid and coverage of the state-share for Medicaid. Direct Support Providers should be officially classified as essential workers.
- The misguided understanding of an individual's contribution to society is seen most glaringly in the provision of care for people with COVID-19 and how some health systems classify who should receive lifesaving treatment. But it also is present in other ways, including discriminatory hiring and pay practices. Someone with a disability is twice as likely to live in poverty and be unemployed, and the rates are even higher for Black or Native persons with disabilities.

### QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES:

- Do you support a minimum wage of \$15 for all workers, including those with disabilities? How do you propose protecting people living with a disability from discriminatory economic practices?
- Explain your plan to fix the structural barriers in Social Security so that people with disabilities are not caught in a poverty trap.
- What plans do you have to improve public education access for students with disabilities?
- People living with disabilities face a disproportional incidence of violence from law enforcement and incarceration. What steps will you take to reduce these incidents and break down the systemic barriers that cause this?