

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



FIGHTING *for a* **FAIR SHOT** *for* **FAMILIES, KIDS and SENIORS**

Fighting for the Rights and Equality of Persons with Disabilities

Since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act almost 30 years ago, people with disabilities living in the United States have made significant progress to become included in all aspects of society. Despite great advances, there is still much work to be done to ensure that Pennsylvanians with disabilities can live independently, have equal opportunities, and can be economically self-sufficient. As a member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and the Committee on Finance, Senator Casey is uniquely positioned to continue his advocacy on behalf of persons with disabilities.

- In 2017, Senator Casey led the **fight to protect Medicaid** when there were numerous proposals to cut the program. Medicaid isn't only medical coverage, it is the how millions of Pennsylvanian and Americans with disabilities live in their own homes, get to and from work and are full participants in their communities. Medicaid is a critical program supporting people with disabilities. With the partnership of the disability community, Senator Casey has been successful at making sure the program continues to support over 2.8 million Pennsylvania citizens to receive high quality health care as well as the supports they need to work and live full lives.
- In December 2014, the **ABLE Act**, written and championed by Senator Casey, was signed into law by President Obama. The law makes it possible for people with disabilities and their families to create tax-exempt savings accounts that can fund a variety of essential expenses for the person with a disability, including educational expenses; medical and dental care; health, prevention, and wellness expenditures; employment training and support; assistive technology; personal supports services; transportation; housing; and other expenses for life necessities. The ABLE Act gives these individuals an option for saving for their future financial needs in a way that supports their unique situation and makes it more feasible to live full, productive lives in their communities. As a result of federal enabling legislation, 48 states, including Pennsylvania, have enacted state laws to create ABLE Acts. Over 20,000 Americans with disabilities have opened ABLE accounts and have saved more than \$105 million for their future disability expenses.
- In December 2017, with Senator Casey as the lead, the **ABLE Financial Planning Act** was passed, making it possible for a family to rollover a college savings fund into an ABLE account.
- In 2015, Senator Casey introduced the **Empowering Parent and Students Through Information Act**, which was enacted as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This law clarifies state guidelines and empowers parents to make more informed decisions about which educational track is best for their child with a disability.
- Working with his Republican colleagues, Senators Hatch and Cassidy, Senator Casey reintroduced the **RISE (Respond, Innovate, Succeed, and Empower) Act** in 2017, which would make it easier for postsecondary students with disabilities to get the supports and accommodations they need to be academically successful. Students with disabilities often face barriers in college that prevent them from truly excelling. RISE would ease the transition for students with disabilities from high school to college by clarifying the documentation a college or university must accept as proof of disability. It also provides support for technical assistance to colleges and universities to better serve their students with disabilities.

- Senator Casey is also focusing on both safety and the rights of students with disabilities as they pursue their education. In March 2018, he introduced the **SECuRE Act**, which would ensure students with disabilities have access to educational materials to prevent sexual assault. Students with disabilities have the highest rate of sexual assault of any group of students. In June 2018, he also introduced the **Higher Education Mental Health Act of 2018**, legislation to create a commission to make recommendations to universities, states, and the federal government to better support students with mental health disabilities and concerns.
- Senator Casey was the first cosponsor of the **Disability Integration Act**. This bill would ensure that individuals with disabilities who wish to remain in their homes are able to receive support and services similar to those living in institutionalized environments, thus aiding in a more independent lifestyle for many people.
- Senator Casey is a longtime supporter of fully funding the **Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**. The original federal government commitment to IDEA was to fund the legislation at 40 percent of the excess cost of educating a student with a disability. Unfortunately the federal government has never lived up to this expectation. Currently IDEA funds approximately 16 percent of the costs.
- Senator Casey successfully requested a Government Accountability Office review of the accessibility of voting systems and polling places to individuals with disabilities. Despite improvements in recent election cycles, those with disabilities continue to face unacceptable barriers to voting. This review will shine a light on what remains to be done to ensure all Americans have unfettered access to the franchise.

Resources for Pennsylvanians with Disabilities:

- If you feel that your rights have been violated under the Americans with Disabilities Act or would like more information on protections under the law, please visit www.ada.gov or www.disability.gov.
- If you would like information on services for individuals with disabilities in Pennsylvania, please visit <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/servicesfordisabled/>.
- Please do not hesitate to call Senator Casey's Harrisburg office at (717) 231-7540 or visit <http://casey.senate.gov/constituents/casework/>.