As you and your colleagues work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 appropriations bills, we respectfully request that you increase funding for the Model Systems program and the Model Systems Knowledge Translational Center (MSKTC), funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) at the U.S Department of Health and Human Services and housed under the Administration for Community Living (ACL). The Model Systems program provides the entirety of the rehabilitation process from emergency services at the time of an 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. The Model Systems program has not seen an increase in funding since 2006. NIDILRR is the federal government’s primary disability research program. Conducting basic and translational research, the Institute addresses issues from fall prevention to state-of-the-art spinal cord therapies, traumatic brain advancements and burn injury innovations through its Model Systems program. In addition to the comprehensive care of individuals with these serious conditions, the Model Systems provide information to a wide variety of stakeholders including individuals, both civilians and military personnel; those living with chronic conditions and disabilities; health care professionals; and the public at a national and international level.

The SCI, TBI, and Burn Model System Centers were established in 1970, 1987, and 1994, respectively. To date there are 18 SCI, 16 TBI and 4 Burn Model Systems, respectively across the United States. For over 50 years, the 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 these chronic conditions and disabilities as well as providing essential information to their families as well as community supports.

To further support the work of all three Model Systems, increased funding for the Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center is needed to translate data, research, and clinical knowledge into resources to benefit the SCI, TBI and burn injury communities. Since 2015 Congress has increased NIH funding by 70 percent. During the same period the Model Systems program funding has remained stagnant and has received a one-time supplement in FY 2022 of $25,000 per center. NIDILRR needs additional funding to expand its Model Systems program and support the growing population of individuals living with SCI, TBI and burn injuries. Therefore, we request funding for the Institute at $150M for FY 2025.

There are approximately five million people living with SCI and TBI and over the past 16 years, there are approximately half a million individuals with burn injuries discharged into the community. We need to increase funding to ensure the Model Systems program can serve those who live with these traumatic injuries, and help them access customized rehabilitation programs so that they can return to their communities. We urge you to consider the tremendous benefits of a sustained investment into NIDILRR, the Nation's premier institute for coordinating research and systems of rehabilitation focused on regaining function and long-term quality of life outcomes.

Sincerely,

[Contact Information]