



Alliance for the Betterment of
Citizens with Disabilities

Empowering People: Providers Shaping Policies

The Tragedy of the Passenger Plane Collision Near Washington D.C.

We are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of life and offer our deepest sympathy to families and friends who are now in mourning.

We are deeply troubled that the blame for this tragedy has been put at the feet of individuals with severe intellectual disabilities among others.

We respectfully ask our President to lead us in our efforts to overcome prejudice against individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Today, January 30, 2025, President Trump spoke about the tragic plane crash at National Airport in DC and pointed blame at DEI and the “FAA diversity push includes focus on hiring people with severe intellectual and psychiatric disabilities... and they want them in and they want them. They can be air traffic controllers. I don’t think so.” Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, also at the briefing, seemed to suggest that hires made based on DEI policies played a role in the crash, but acknowledged it is not clear at this point in the investigation where fault may lie.

What we know about the hiring initiative at the FAA/DOT.

- The implication is that the policy is new, but it has been included in the FAA’s website since at least as early as February 2013 and was present during the entirety of the last two administrations and remains present at this time.
- The policy allows managers to hire qualified people with severe disabilities without advertising vacancies and without competition, however the hiring policies DO NOT negate the need for candidates to meet rigorous and required qualifications which vary by position.
- The FAA employs tens of thousands of people in a wide range of positions, from administrative to oversight and execution of critical safety functions. Like many employers, they seek qualified candidates from as many sources as possible, including individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

We understand the desire to find answers to this tragedy as quickly as possible, but as our Defense Secretary suggested, it is not clear where the fault may lie.

The professionals who work at ABCD member agencies have devoted their careers to serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who often experience stigma and discrimination.

We implore President Trump to use his power and leadership to help us in our life-long effort to overcome prejudice against individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.