

NARRATOR:

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum presents Steven Lawrence, Independent Consultant.

STEVEN LAWRENCE:

One in four Americans are people with disabilities, roughly a billion people worldwide, yet what we found in the data for 2019 is that basically two cents of every dollar awarded by foundations in the Foundation 1000 focused on disability. But first, let me say, how did we get to that figure? How did we come up with the benchmarking report that's just been released? Well, without going into too much detail, I want to note that our research process included defining disability for the purposes of our study and in fact, even creating a working definition of disability, inclusion, rights and justice. And so in the funding, we're capturing both support for both apparent and non-apparent disabilities. I will also note we're excluding funding for medical research for the specific reason that this funding often supports training for individuals to conduct medical research who are not people with disabilities, and the medical research itself may or may not ultimately yield a benefit for the disability community.

The next phase of this work, once we had our definitions, was licensing grant level data from Candid using its Foundation 1000 data set. And for those of you who aren't familiar with it, it's a data set of 1,000 of the largest private and community foundations in the U.S. These funders, because they're the biggest ones, account for about 45%, so close to half of all foundation giving by the roughly 100,000 foundations. In addition to this set, we supplemented it with about a dozen disability focused funders that weren't included in the Foundation 1000 already, such as the Disability Rights Fund.

I'll also note that the data we looked at are for 2019 and then to provide a trend analysis, we also looked at 2016 data. Now of course, it's 2023 and you're going to say, "What? 2019? That those data are so old?" Well, in point of fact, they're still the most current data available from Candid for the Foundation 1000 until probably the end of this summer, we'll get the 2020 data. In this case, it's not Candid's fault. COVID had impacts on many things, and it very much impacted the speed at which the... Well, both foundations were filing their information returns and the IRS has been processing them. So it's unfortunately still the latest we have. Finally, I'll just note that the Forum has a research advisory group who are providing feedback and guidance throughout this process.

All right, so let's get to the second big headline. From my perspective, what was surprising and important is that most foundation support focuses on a medical or charity model of disability, which prioritizes fixing or curing disability. So of the 755 million, we tracked for 2019 in disability focused funding, 94% funded disability services and supports. For example, funding for organizations serving individuals with specific disabilities, such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association, funding for substance abuse treatment programs, recreational programs and camps for children with disabilities. Just 6% of funds supported disability rights and social

justice. This works out to one cent for every \$10 the Foundation 1000 funders awarded focused on disability.

So Kayla, if you will please close the poll. All right, so basically if you look at that bottom bar, 28% of you got the answer right. It's 83 funders that provided this support. Why is the disability rights and social justice funding important? Well, it's because this is consistent with a social model of disability, which believes that society places physical and attitudinal barriers in front of disabled people, preventing them from full participation in society. For example, it includes funding for systems change work, such as support for disability rights advocate, or I'll give you another grant example. A grant to the Southern Black Policy and Advocacy Network, and its HIV/AIDS leadership and capacity building initiative focused on the U.S. South.

What's the third headline? Well, the third headline is simply while we saw 83 funders for disability rights and social justice, three out of four funders included in the Foundation 1000 made at least one grant consistent with our definition of disability broadly. That certainly seems like a strong place to begin in terms of growing support.

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