

THE JAKE CASSELL FUND FOR SPECIAL NEEDS • CASE FOR SUPPORT

# Closing the Gap for Grassroots Disability Programs in the Mid-Atlantic and beyond

Statistics that reveal the urgent need — and the outsized opportunity — for corporate investment in grassroots disability services.



# The Problem: Unsustainable Systems

Resources for people with disabilities are dramatically underfunded, resulting in unsustainable services and programs. In the Mid-Atlantic, state support for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) Services is low, even compared to the national average. The District of Columbia and West Virginia spend about 3.5% of their budget each on IDD Supports and Services;

Maryland spends 2.18%, Delaware spends 1.87%, and Virginia spends just 0.68%. Philanthropy is not filling the gap. **While one in four U.S. adults lives with a disability, only 2% of charitable giving is directed towards disability programs.**



We know that with access to healthcare, therapies, supportive services, and community networks, children and youth with disabilities can thrive in their schools and communities. The Jake Cassell Fund is stepping up to make this possible, raising and distributing funds to grassroots organizations & schools throughout the mid-Atlantic who are making an incredible impact on shoestring budgets.

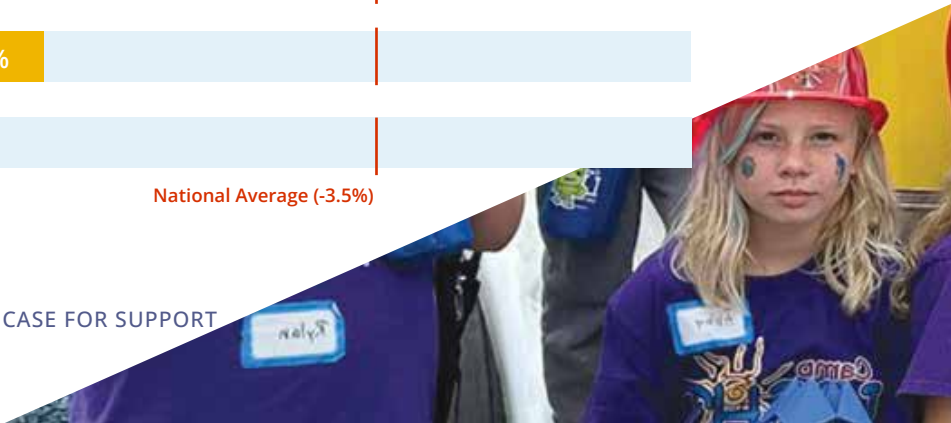
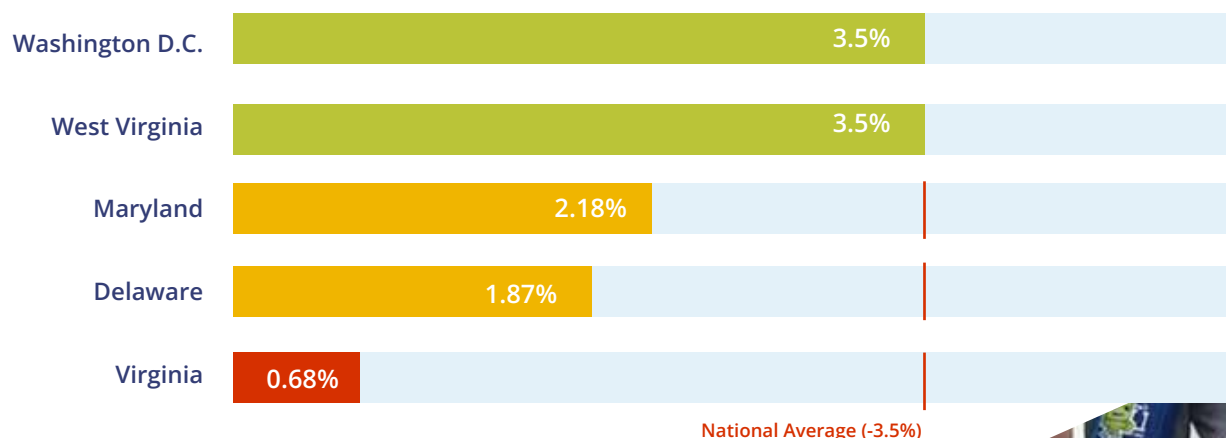
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*“Prioritizing disability programs in your Corporate Social Responsibility efforts is not just charity — it’s a **critically valuable investment** in your organization, staff, and community.”*

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## Mid-Atlantic State Spending on IDD Services

Percentage of state budget allocated to Intellectual & Developmental Disability supports — all fall near or below the national average.



# The Opportunity: Close the Gap

We implore you to help us close the funding gap. Prioritizing disability programs in your Corporate Social Responsibility efforts is not just charity; it's a critically valuable investment in your organization, staff, and community. **Companies that lead in disability-inclusive practices see higher revenue, lower staff turnover, and increased community trust.** At The Jake Cassell Fund, we know that identifying high-impact, community-based organizations takes time and resources. Working with our wide network of community foundation partners, we have identified and vetted nonprofits who are showing up day in and day out for children and youth with disabilities and their families. We identify high-potential, grassroots organizations in underserved and rural areas that lack the visibility to reach mainstream corporate donors. Partnering with the The Jake Cassell Fund is a meaningful step towards closing the gap for disability programs who need funds to continue their work.



## THE FUNDING GAP

1 in 4

U.S. adults live with a disability

CDC / U.S. Population Data

2%

of all charitable giving directed to disability programs in the US

Philanthropic Sector Data

92%

of every dollar raised by the Jake Cassell Fund goes directly to nonprofit partners

Jake Cassell Fund Financials



# About The Jake Cassell Fund

Our Fund honors the life of Jacob Brian Cassell, a young man on the autism spectrum who spent his life spreading love, kindness, and joy. Jake was an honor roll student, school mascot, Boy Scout, son and brother, active member and advocate within the autism community, and an altruist whose heart for others was a defining quality. When Jake passed away, Steve Cassell and his wife Jennifer founded the Jake Cassell Fund to extend Jake's legacy by identifying and providing resources to disability service providers in underserved communities, often in rural or other low-income areas, that lack the visibility and capacity to access mainstream funding opportunities.



**“His heart for others was a defining quality — and through the Jake Cassell Fund, that legacy continues to open doors for special needs children in underserved communities.”**

**2022**

Year founded,  
honoring  
Jacob Brian Cassell  
(3 years of operation)

**17**

High-impact  
organizations funded  
across the  
Mid-Atlantic and US

**100%**

Volunteer-led,  
lean overhead,  
high-impact model

**\$300k<sup>+</sup>**

In grants distributed  
to frontline  
nonprofits





# Impact

We fund programs that are creative, responsive to their communities' needs, and often unfunded by government or other philanthropic organizations. Specifically, we prioritize organizations who are bridging the gap between adolescence and adulthood for youth with disabilities.

For the past three years, The Jake Cassell Fund supported **The Foundation Learning Center ("FLC") in Landover, Maryland**. FLC offers special needs education to autistic children in grades kindergarten through tenth, 84 percent of whom identify as male and 80 percent as African American. Our friends at FLC focused their efforts on developing a life-skills program, which includes the conceptualization and launch of a student-run café where students practice key workplace skills like taking orders, making food, and enforcing safe food practices like wearing gloves and cleaning surfaces. Students also launched a design center where they are able to design and print t-shirts, mugs and bags, hoping students develop their independence in creating products for sale with reduced staff assistance and hand-over-hand support.

Another example is our three-year partnership with the **Oglala-Lakota Technical School on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota**, one of the most economically challenged school districts in the U.S., which has contributed to a 37% increased enrollment of special education students, increased graduation rates among special education students, and an increased number of special education students attending post-secondary schools. Since our first award in 2023, their high school graduates – all youth with special needs – have gone on to attend welding school, nursing school, and other technical education opportunities. Recently, the school district began leveraging their grant funds to address high dropout rates among 9th graders, now providing support to 8th graders as they transition to high school.

## ON-THE-GROUND IMPACT

PINE RIDGE INDIAN RESERVATION · OGLALA-LAKOTA TECHNICAL SCHOOL

+37%

### Growing special education enrollment

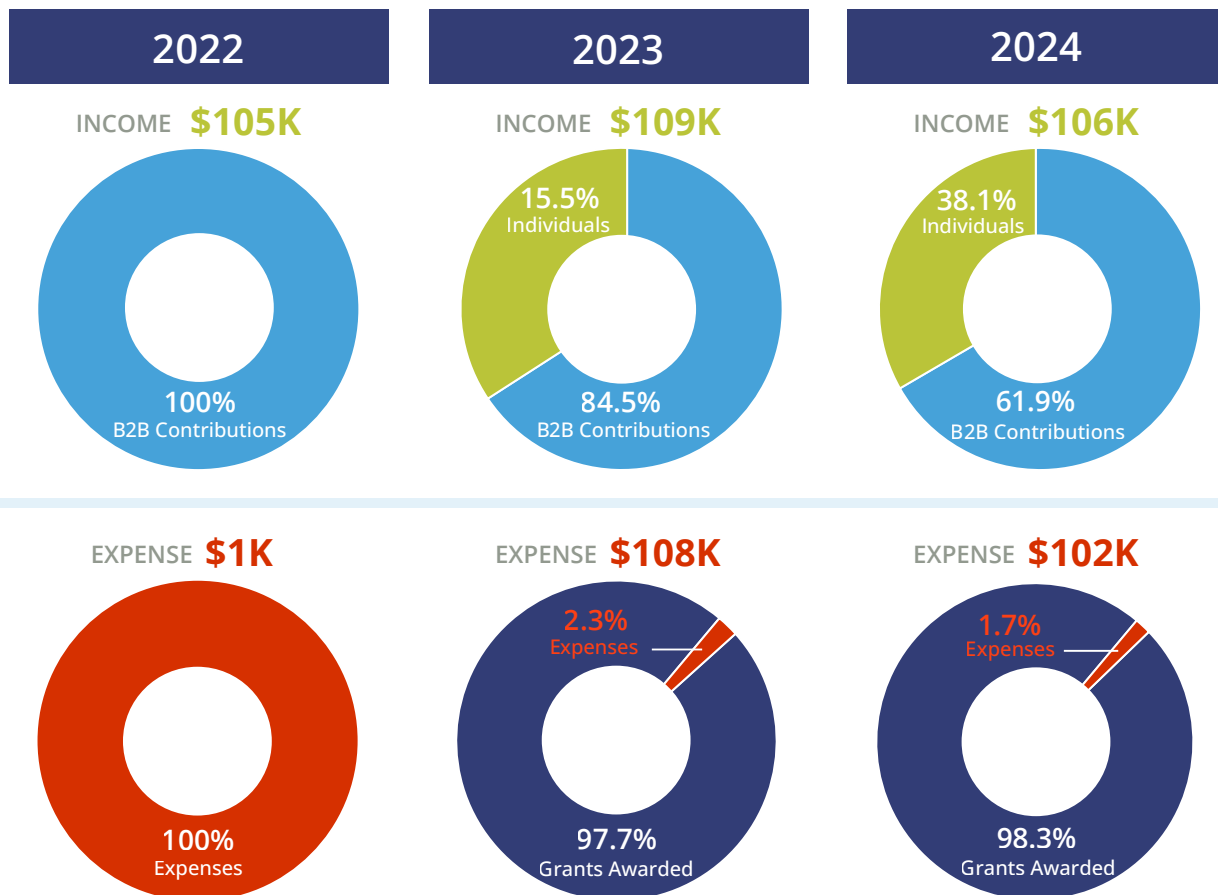
Over a three-year partnership with one of the most economically challenged school districts in the U.S., Jake Cassell Fund grants contributed to a 37% increase in special education enrollment, higher graduation rates, and graduates going on to welding school, nursing school, and other technical education programs.

# Financials

The Jake Cassell Fund implements a lean, high-impact financial model. We develop our annual budget intentionally to drive as many resources as possible to our frontline nonprofit partners. **Since our foundation in 2022, we have raised in excess of \$375,000 and distributed to date over \$300,000 in grants to 17 high-impact organizations across the mid-Atlantic.** By the conclusion of the current 2026 grant round, over 92% of funds raised will have been awarded as grants to our non-profit community partners.

Our work has been built on the incredible generosity of our community, namely people who loved Jake and have a personal connection to our mission. We have also been proud to partner with Bike to the Beach, Inc., an organization that unites cyclists to support local autism and disability nonprofits. While these efforts are ongoing, we are seeking institutional partners to further diversify our revenue streams to withstand natural ebbs and flows in philanthropic trends. We have built deep trust within our region through community-led efforts and are eager to expand our impact through sustainable partnerships that will enable us to grow.

## Financial Overview 2022–2024





## Call to Action

The gap in disability funding is not a lack of care; it is a lack of visibility. The nonprofits at the frontline of this work are small, under-resourced, and lack the infrastructure to prioritize institutional fundraising. We have spent three years building trust in these communities, providing consistent and responsive support, and strengthening our regional infrastructure to respond to gaps in disability funding. What we need now are leaders ready to step into this work with us to refuse to let one in four remain an afterthought in philanthropy. We invite you to invest in our work, putting your care and commitment to disabled communities into action. We commit to distributing funds to organizations that have a proven track record and deep impact in their communities and who are accountable to the projects and programs for which our grants are directed. **We invite you to open doors and introduce us to your colleagues, networks, and philanthropic advisors who want to offer their clients access to grassroots causes and service providers with deep roots and incredible potential in their communities.**

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### The Jake Cassell Fund For Special Needs

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Visit us online at [jakecassellfund.org](http://jakecassellfund.org)



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You power this mission. Every act of generosity, every word of encouragement, every vote of confidence drives our work to support individuals with special needs forward. We're deeply grateful.

The Jake Cassell Fund is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. EIN 88-2936213