



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

**DRAFT**

July 16, 2009

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy  
Chairman  
Health, Education, Labor, and  
Pensions Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Kennedy:

The following members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) are writing to express our deep appreciation for the effort that has gone into getting the Affordable Health Choices Act successfully passed by the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee. This comprehensive health reform legislation represents a positive sea change that will significantly improve access to health and long term services and supports for people with disabilities and chronic conditions.

CCD, a coalition of national consumer, service provider and professional organizations, advocates on behalf of persons with disabilities and chronic conditions and their families. We believe that the goal of health care reform should be to assure that all Americans, including people with disabilities and chronic conditions, have access to high quality, comprehensive, affordable health care that meets their individual needs and enables them to be healthy, functional, live as independently as possible, and participate in the community. This measure goes a long way toward meeting that goal.

Many of the provisions will greatly improve the lives of people with disabilities and chronic conditions. In particular, we strongly support the insurance market reforms, including guaranteed issue and renewal of coverage in the individual and small group markets, the prohibition of pre-existing health condition exclusions, and the end of annual and lifetime insurance caps with a limit on out of pocket spending.

We greatly appreciate the bill's recognition of essential benefit categories that improve the ability of people with disabilities and chronic conditions to maintain and improve their functional ability. Specifically, we are most grateful for the Committee's inclusion of coverage of rehabilitation and habilitation "devices" as well as services in the essential benefits package. This statutory language establishes coverage for durable medical equipment, prosthetics,

orthotics, and supplies (DMEPOS) which are critical to the disability and chronic illness population. The bill also covers as essential benefits rehabilitative, habilitative, and mental health and substance abuse services -- all of which are critical to enabling people with disabilities to function independently.

We also applaud the inclusion of the Community Living Assistance Supports and Services (CLASS) Act in the Affordable Health Choices Act. For persons with disabilities and chronically ill older Americans – arguably the most vulnerable populations in the nation – long term services and supports are their primary unmet care need, and are critical to promoting health and preventing illness. The landmark CLASS Act is the threshold to meaningful change ensuring that individuals are able to function as independently as possible within their homes, families, and their communities.

Thank you for your leadership on these critical issues. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff to secure final passage of meaningful and comprehensive health reform legislation that meets the needs of all Americans this year.

Sincerely,

ACCSES

American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation  
 American Association of People with Disabilities  
 American Association on Health and Disability  
 American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities  
 American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association  
 American Network of Community Options and Resources  
 American Occupational Therapy Association  
 American Therapeutic Recreation Association  
 Amputee Coalition of America  
 Association of University Centers on Disabilities  
 Autism Society of America  
 Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
 Brain Injury Association of America  
 Burton Blatt Institute  
 Council for Learning Disabilities  
 Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation  
 Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund  
 Easter Seals  
 Epilepsy Foundation  
 Higher Education Consortium for Special Education  
 Learning Disabilities Association of America  
 Lutheran Services in America  
 Mental Health America  
 National Alliance on Mental Illness  
 National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics  
 National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities  
 National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services  
 National Association of State Head Injury Administrators

National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare  
 National Council on Independent Living  
 National Disability Rights Network  
 National Down Syndrome Congress  
 National Down Syndrome Society  
 National Multiple Sclerosis Society  
 National Rehabilitation Association  
 National Respite Coalition  
 National Spinal Cord Injury Association  
 Paralyzed Veterans of America  
 TASH  
 Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children  
 The Arc of the United States  
 United Cerebral Palsy  
 United Spinal Association  
 World Institute on Disability

**For additional information, please contact any of the individuals below.**

#### **CCD Health Task Force Co-Chairs**

- Mary Andrus, Easter Seals, (202) 347-3066 Tim Nanof, American Occupational Therapy Association, (301) 652-6611 Ext. 2100
- Angela Ostrom, Epilepsy Foundation of America, (301) 918-3766
- Peter Thomas, American Academy of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, (202) 466-6550
- Liz Savage, The Arc of the United States and United Cerebral Palsy, (202) 783-2229

#### **CCD Long Term Services and Supports Co-Chairs**

- Joe Caldwell, Association of University Centers on Disabilities (301) 588-8252
- Marty Ford, The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy (202) 783-2229
- Suellen Galbraith, American Network of Community Options and Resources (703) 535-7850
- Lee Page, Paralyzed Veterans of America (202) 416-7694

