



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

July 20, 2009

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Disability Community Supports H.R. 3200

Dear Chairman Miller:

The following members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) are writing to express our strong support for the America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 (H.R. 3200). 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. H.R. 3200 goes a long way toward meeting that goal. Many of its provisions mark a sea change in improving access to quality, affordable health care for people with disabilities and chronic conditions.

The provisions in the bill that benefit people with disabilities and chronic conditions are far too many to list in this brief letter, but the following provisions stand out as signature achievements of the legislation:

- Major insurance market reforms such as the elimination of discrimination based on health status, a prohibition on pre-existing condition exclusions, guaranteed issue and renewal requirements, elimination of annual and lifetime caps, and mental health and substance abuse parity requirements;
- Significant investments in Medicaid to provide health care services to those with low incomes and disabilities;

- A serious commitment to expand access to affordable coverage through credits for the purchase of insurance through the new Health Insurance Exchange.

In addition, we are especially grateful to you for clarifying coverage of durable medical equipment, orthotics, prosthetics and related supplies in the essential benefits package. As you know, these assistive devices and related services enable individuals with disabilities, injuries and chronic illnesses to facilitate their recovery and restore their ability to function and live as independently as possible.

Furthermore, we are particularly pleased that your Manager's Amendment requires the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board to develop guidelines for technical criteria to ensure that medical and diagnostic equipment used in physicians' offices, clinics, emergency rooms, hospitals, and other medical settings is accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. This historic provision marks a huge step forward in improving access to quality health care for people with disabilities.

Thank you for your tremendous efforts in developing the America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009. We look forward to working 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, including people with disabilities and chronic conditions.

For further information, please contact the CCD Health Task Force Co-Chairs: Peter Thomas, American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (Peter.Thomas@ppsv.com); Angela Ostrom, Epilepsy Foundation (aostrom@efa.org); Mary Andrus, Easter Seals (mandrus@easterseals.org); Liz Savage, The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy Disability Policy Collaboration (savage@thedpc.org); and Tim Nanof, American Occupational Therapy Association (tnanof@aota.org).

Sincerely,

ACCSES

Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
 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
 Amputee Coalition of America
 American Therapeutic Recreation Association
 Association of University Centers on Disabilities
 Autism Society
 Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
 Brain Injury Association of America
 Burton Blatt Institute
 Council for Exceptional Children
 Council of Parent Attorney's and Advocates
 Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation
 Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
 Easter Seals

Epilepsy Foundation
Family Voices
Helen Keller National Center
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
Lutheran Services in America
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Coalition on Deaf-Blindness
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Respite Coalition
National Spinal Cord Injury Association
Paralyzed Veterans of America
The Arc of the United States
United Cerebral Palsy
United Spinal Association

The following organizations that do not belong to CCD also strongly support H.R.3200:

Special Olympics

CC: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable Steny Hoyer