

January 13, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions Committee

The Honorable Christopher Dodd
Senate Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions Committee

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Dear Majority Leader Reid, Chairman Baucus, Chairman Harkin and Senator Dodd:

The undersigned national organizations representing older adults, people with disabilities, and those who serve them write to thank you for your leadership on the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*. We are especially grateful for the inclusion of multiple provisions related to improving long-term services and supports (LTSS) in this country, and as you begin merging the House and Senate bills we strongly urge you to keep these provisions in the final bill. Together, the multiple and complementary provisions related to LTSS in the Senate bill have the promise of: increasing personal choice and independence, helping people live in their homes and communities, bending the cost curve on Medicaid, reducing caregiver stress, and offering financial assistance to middle class families currently paying out-of-pocket for long-term care needs.

We deeply appreciate inclusion of *Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS)* provisions in the Senate bill. Similar provisions are in the House bill, and we look forward to inclusion of the CLASS program in the final health care bill as well.

As the health care bills are merged, we note the importance of retaining all four Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) provisions currently in the Senate bill as they are currently structured and at their proposed funding levels: the *Community First Choice* option for states; the *removal of barriers to providing HCBS in the states*; the *state balancing incentives program*; and the *spousal impoverishment protections for HCBS beneficiaries*. These four provisions complement CLASS and each other, and are critically important elements of health care reform for seniors and people with disabilities. As you know, these are financially difficult times for states seeking to balance multiple policy objectives. If we are to succeed in reducing the cost curve for long-term care services and supports, we must provide states with additional tools for improving the allocation of Medicaid resources between institutional care and less costly home and community-based care. These provisions offer the kinds of tools states need.

In addition to these provisions, we also urge you to retain provisions that would extend the *Money Follows the Person Rebalancing Demonstration* and would allocate resources to *Aging and Disability Resource Centers*.

Currently, we spend approximately 73% of Medicaid long-term care resources devoted to older people and adults with physical disabilities on institutional care, even though most individuals prefer the often less expensive and more cost-effective HCBS. According to AARP's Public Policy Institute, Medicaid dollars can support nearly three older people and adults with physical disabilities in home and community-based settings for every person in a nursing facility. According to a study by Stephen Kaye published in a 2009 *Health Affairs* article, states that invested in HCBS, over a relatively short period of time, were able to slow their rate of Medicaid spending on long-term care.

It is important to recall that, in July of last year, the SCAN Foundation released findings from Lake Research Partners showing that nearly 8 of 10 people surveyed would be more likely to support health reform if it improved coverage of home and community-based long-term care services. Additionally, these provisions will make the health reform package more attractive to the broader population.

Inclusion of the provisions discussed above will help families, strengthen support for health reform, promote choice and independence, reduce burdens on Medicaid and help to address what is likely the greatest unmet care need for millions of vulnerable Americans.

Sincerely,

AARP

APSE

Alzheimer's Association

American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Association on Health and Disability

American Association on Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities

American Dance Therapy Association

American Network of Community Options and Resources

American Society on Aging

Association for Gerontology and Human Development in Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Autism Society

B'nai B'rith International

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Brain Injury Association of America

Burton Blatt Institute

Catholic Health Association of the United States

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

Easter Seals

Families USA

Helen Keller National Center and the National Coalition on Deaf-Blindness

Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
The Jewish Federations of North America
Lutheran Services in America
NCCNHR: The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
NISH
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Association for Home Care and Hospice
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council on Aging
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Institute
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Respite Coalition
National Senior Citizens Law Center
National Spinal Cord Injury Association
OWL – The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
Paralyzed Veterans of America
SEIU
Services and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Elders
TASH
The Arc of the United States
United Cerebral Palsy
United Spinal Association
Vets First
Volunteers of America
Wider Opportunities for Women
World Institute on Disability