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The undersigned Co-Chairs of the Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities (CCD) thank the Department of Health and Human Services for finalizing the “Ensuring Access to Medicaid Services” rule. This rule contains provisions that will improve access to and quality of home and community-based services (HCBS) – services that are key to achieving full integration and access to community living. Namely, the rule will strengthen oversight of person-centered planning and promote self-determination; require states to create a grievance system that will give HCBS recipients another tool to fix problems and advocate for improvements in their services; and require states to implement a critical incident management system, to address incidents of abuse and neglect.

All too often, people with disabilities cannot actually get the services they are entitled to. The vast majority of workers who provide these extremely important services are women, mostly Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and immigrant women. Their work has long been undervalued. Consistently low wages and poor benefits lead to high turnover and persistent shortages, which directly reduce both the availability and the quality of HCBS services. Ensuring fair wages is the best way to keep pace with the growing demand for high-quality HCBS care, thereby improving access to HCBS, continuity of care, and quality.

The final rule also creates a procedure for direct care workers, people with disabilities, family members, and providers to advise and consult on payment rates for direct care workers. It also requires states to report on how long people with HCBS have to wait to get certain services and to track and report on gaps in services. Last, the rule requires states to ensure that a certain percentage of rates paid to providers for certain services are passed through to direct care workers. This multi-pronged approach, alongside

additional actions to ensure sufficient and adequate reimbursement rates, creates an opportunity to meaningfully improve access to HCBS.

CCD is eager to partner with HHS as this rule gets implemented.

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## About CCD:

The Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities, headquartered in Washington DC, is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration, and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society, free from racism, ableism, sexism, and xenophobia, as well as LGBTQ+ based discrimination and religious intolerance. Since 1973, CCD has advocated on behalf of people of all ages with physical and mental disabilities and their families. CCD has worked to achieve federal legislation and regulations that assure that the millions of children and adults with disabilities are fully integrated into the mainstream of society.