



March 19, 2007

The Honorable John Spratt
Chairman
House Budget Committee
207 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Spratt:

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) are writing to strongly support the inclusion – in the FY 2008 Budget Resolution -- of a “sense of Congress” resolution opposing the issuance of a regulation cutting the Medicaid rehabilitative services option by \$2.3 billion over the next five years. CCD is the largest coalition of national organizations representing people with disabilities, their families, caregivers and advocates.

Over 40 states use the rehabilitative services option to finance an array of critical community-based services for persons with disabilities, including individuals with developmental disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and serious mental illnesses. These services are essential to reducing physical and mental disabilities as well as to maintain the health and daily functioning of people with disabilities in the community.

Despite a lengthy public record indicating the Administration’s support for community-based services and choices for persons with disabilities rather than institution-based care, (i.e., The New Freedom Initiative and Executive Order 13217 related to community-based alternatives for individuals with disabilities), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) had repeatedly sought to narrow the definition of rehabilitative services under Medicaid. Paradoxically, this policy will have the effect of increasing the use of institutional facilities, emergency rooms, inpatient hospitals and nursing homes and enhancing the already strong institutional bias of the program.

The overall CMS approach to this matter adds another worrisome component. After the Congress rejected Administration proposals to narrow the rehabilitative services option during deliberations surrounding the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA), CCD was troubled to learn that the agency is now taking the unprecedented action of seeking the exact same programmatic changes through regulations alone.

Mr. Chairman, CCD believes that the proposed concurrent resolution is the first step toward Congress ensuring access to these important Medicaid services. If the rehabilitative services option needs to be re-examined, the committees of jurisdiction should take appropriate action after consultation with the nation's governors, state legislators and county governments.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

ACCESS/DSPA Alliance
Adapted Physical Activity Council
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
American Counseling Association
American Foundation for the Blind
American Network of Community Options and Resources
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Therapeutic Recreation Association
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Center for Disability Issues & the Health Professions
Easter Seals
Epilepsy Foundation
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 County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Disability Representatives
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Consortium of Physical Education and Recreation for Individuals with Disabilities
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress

National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives
National Rehabilitation Association
NISH
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Research Institute for Independent Living
The Arc of the United States
United Cerebral Palsy
United Spinal Association
World Institute on Disability