



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

February 28, 2000

Dear Ways and Means Committee Members,

We are writing as the Social Security Task Force Co-chairs for the Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) regarding H.R. 5. The Committee is scheduled to take up H.R. 5, legislation to eliminate the earnings test for senior citizens. It has come to our attention that there could be an effort during the mark-up of H.R. 5 to re-link the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level for people who are blind to the new rules for senior citizens under the legislation.

SGA is used to determine both who is eligible for federal disability benefits and to determine when eligibility for those benefits ends. Without commenting at this time on the new rules proposed for senior citizens, we believe it is wrong to single out any group of people with a particular disability for separate treatment from all other people with disabilities for purposes of SGA.

Further, the Social Security Subcommittee is committed to a review of Social Security disability programs. The issue of SGA for people with disabilities is certain to be discussed and considered at length. We are committed to working with the Members of the Subcommittee and the Members of the full Ways and Means Committee to address SGA and other related issues affecting people with disabilities.

We emphasize that we are not advocating a restriction or a diminishment in the way that Title II disability benefits are currently calculated for people who are blind. We do advocate fairness. There is no compelling reason to treat one disability group differently from the rest. As this Committee recognized last year during consideration of work incentives legislation, people with disabilities of all types, including physical, sensory, cognitive, or mental impairments, can experience difficulty in entering or re-entering the work force and can experience substantial costs associated with their disability not encountered by people without disabilities. We believe that it is time to address need rather than diagnosis.

We urge you to include ALL people with disabilities under the new rules in H.R. 5. In the alternative, pass a "clean" bill and commit to a full and thorough examination of the issues surrounding SGA levels in the Social Security disability programs. For further information, please contact Paul Seifert at (410)730-7190.

Sincerely,

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