

AUCD Response to HHS Announcement on the CLASS program

SILVER SPRING, MD (October 17, 2011) — The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), a membership organization of approximately 100 University Centers and Programs working for and with people with developmental and other lifelong disabilities to promote community living, expressed disappointment regarding the Administration’s decision to postpone efforts to implement the Community Living Assistance Services and Support (CLASS) program. Late on October 14, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced in a [letter](#) to congressional leaders that the Administration “does not see a viable path forward to CLASS implementation at this time.”

“We believe that the Administration’s decision is too soon,” stated Kim Musheno, Director of Legislative Affairs for AUCD. “The [report](#) completed by the actuaries and other experts in the HHS CLASS office provides a menu of options, all of which should be explored to determine if they could work in the marketplace. We strongly urge the Administration to continue working through these models to find a workable solution to the critical and growing need for long term care supports.”

In the letter addressed to House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH), the Secretary also points out that “left unaddressed, long-term care costs to taxpayers will only increase. Without insurance coverage or the personal wealth to pay large sums in their later years, more Americans with disabilities will rely on Medicaid services once their assets are depleted, putting further strain on State and Federal budgets.”

According to the HHS report, only 2.8 percent of Americans have private long-term care insurance, although about 70 percent of people age 65 and older will need such care. The current market does not offer viable options for those unable to access private long-term care insurance. The CLASS program, developed by the late Senator Ted Kennedy, was intended to address this problem by creating a new national insurance program financed by voluntary payroll deductions to provide benefits to adults who become severely functionally impaired. The intent was to help to preserve the Medicaid program, which currently bears the brunt of covering long-term supports and services and cannot sustain an aging baby boomer generation. We need to continue to work to identify a solution that promotes independence and

dignity across the lifespan by giving beneficiaries the right to control and choose what services they receive, how and where they are delivered and who provides them.

AUCD is a member of [Advance CLASS](#), a group that is focused on implementation of a strong and vital long-term services and supports program. AUCD stands ready to assist the White House and the Dept. of Health and Human Services to find a viable solution to our nation's long term care needs.

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The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), located in Silver Spring, MD, promotes and supports a national network of interdisciplinary centers on disabilities. The members of AUCD represent every U.S. state and territory. AUCD and its members work to advance policy and practice through research, education, leadership, and services for and with individuals with developmental and other disabilities, their families, and communities. For more information, visit AUCD's website: www.aucd.org.