

March 13, 2009

Senator Edward Kennedy  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kennedy:

On behalf of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) we want to thank you for your leadership on the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) Act.

The CLASS Act takes a crucial step forward in addressing the long-term services and supports needs of Americans. In the coming decades, such needs will increase dramatically with the aging of the baby boom generation. The CLASS Act provides options to purchase long-term care insurance through a national program. By pooling risk, premiums will be more affordable to all Americans, including working individuals with disabilities.

The CLASS Act embodies ideals long-embraced by the disability community. The vast majority of Americans want to receive long-term services and supports in their homes and communities. The CLASS Act provides self-directed benefits that will allow individuals to purchase the services and supports to best meet their needs and desires.

In one in five households in the United States, family caregivers are providing care to an individual with disabilities. The CLASS Act will help support these families to remain together and reduce unnecessary placements in costly nursing homes and other institutions.

Disability is a natural part of the human experience. However, most Americans are not prepared for the costs of long-term services and supports when they arise. While 46 million Americans lack health insurance for acute care, over 200 million Americans have no protection against the costs of long-term care services. Medicaid remains the predominant funding stream for long-term care, which requires individuals with disabilities to impoverish themselves. The CLASS Act provides an alternative. It will help relieve growing pressures on the Medicaid program and allow for much needed improvements.

The CLASS Act acknowledges the universal nature of disability and addresses impending needs of an aging population. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue for our country. AUCD strongly supports the CLASS Act and looks forward to working with you to pass this legislation, ideally incorporated within comprehensive health care reform.

Sincerely,



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