

**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

February 15, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
United States of America
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

As co-chairs of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities' (CCD) Fiscal Policy Task Force, we applaud your 2013 budget proposal for taking a balanced approach to fiscal responsibility and working towards bringing our nation's economic situation into balance. At the same time, we know that people with disabilities disproportionately rely on the federally-funded safety net for services to live, learn, work and play in their communities. These services assist many people with disabilities to live independently in the community, avoiding costly institutional care and increasing the opportunities to work and pay taxes. These services are funded by the federal government because the private market place would not or could not meet the unique needs of people with disabilities.


There are several specific funding levels and other programmatic changes in the budget proposal that we would like to comment on specifically.

- We commend the investment in programs such as early intervention, job training and employment that received slight increases in funding.
- There are many vital programs that were significantly cut in the budget proposal, including areas like public health and prevention, housing, community services and mental health and substance abuse supports and services.
- The Prevention and Public Health Fund was meant to be transformational and fund innovations in public health, not supplant existing program funding.
- There are structural changes proposed to Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security that could harm beneficiaries and/or undermine the integrity of these safety net programs. Any modifications to entitlement programs on which people with disabilities depend for their health, long-term supports and income security as their lifeline, such as Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income and veterans disability compensation and pension benefits, must not result in reduced access to needed services either directly, through eligibility restrictions or benefit cuts, or indirectly, through inadequate provider reimbursement rates.

- Finally, the budget proposal includes a government-wide review of all programs serving people with disabilities to look for areas of better coordination. We agree that this is an important conversation, but it must happen in collaboration with people with disabilities, families, service providers and other advocates to assure that there are not unintended consequences that may harm people with disabilities.

Again, we thank you for your support of people with disabilities and your efforts at fiscal responsibility. We look forward to working with you and Congress as the budget and appropriations process moves forward.

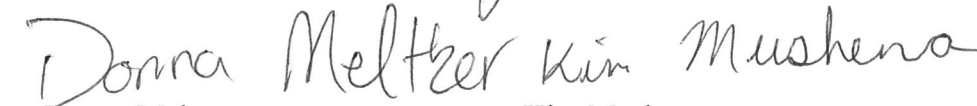
Sincerely,



Julio Abreu
Mental Health America



Jennifer Dexter
Easter Seals



Donna Meltzer
Epilepsy Foundation

Kim Musheno
Association of University Centers on Disabilities