

Press Statement

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AUCD Applauds Administration on Opening of the Office on CLASS

SILVER SPRING, MD (January 6, 2011) —U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius yesterday announced that the implementation of the Community Living Assistance Services and Support (CLASS) program will be housed in a new Office of CLASS within the Administration on Aging (AoA) and overseen by Assistant Secretary for Aging Kathy Greenlee. The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) is pleased that the Administration is moving forward with this first step toward implementation of this important new program passed as part of the Affordable Care Act and is confident that Secretary Greenlee understands how to design the program to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities across the lifespan.

Kathy Greenlee understands the importance of community-based services and supports and how important they are to help people with disabilities of all ages remain at home and in their communities and avoid more expensive out-of-home placements. She is also a former insurance regulator and knows well the issues involved with running an insurance program. Placing CLASS under her supervision makes sense for the success of this vital program.

The CLASS Act, championed by the late Senator Ted Kennedy, establishes a new national insurance program financed by voluntary payroll deductions to provide cash benefits to adults who become severely functionally impaired. This new system will 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. It will promote 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.

We look forward to working with the Administration on the implementation of this most important component of health reform. We are proud to be part of Advance CLASS, a group that is focused on implementation of a strong long-term services and supports program.

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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.