

April 6, 2009

Senator Tom Harkin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

On behalf of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) we thank you for your dedication and leadership on the Community Choice Act (S.683). Medicaid is a lifeline for people with disabilities. However, there is a long-standing institutional bias within the Medicaid program. While states are required to provide services within nursing homes, community-based services and supports are optional. As a result over 60% of Medicaid funding for long-term services and supports is spent on institutional services.

The developmental disabilities system has effectively utilized the Medicaid Home and Community Based Services waiver to shift the majority of funding from institutional settings towards the community. Yet the extent to which this has occurred varies considerably among states. In addition, there are extensive waiting lists for community-based services and supports. Not all states maintain detailed waiting list information, but conservatively hundreds of thousands of individuals with developmental disabilities are awaiting services. Many of these individuals are residing with aging family caregivers. Recent estimates indicate that over 711,478 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities are living with family caregivers who are 60 years of age or older.

The Community Choice Act would provide Americans with equal access to community-based services and supports. It would provide individuals with disabilities in nursing homes and other institutional settings with real options and choices to receive community-based services. It would also help address waiting lists by providing guaranteed access to community-based attendant service and supports within Medicaid. It levels the playing field and would move our country forward towards the vision of the fulfillment of the promise of the US Supreme Court Olmstead decision handed down nearly a decade ago.

AUCD strongly supports the Community Choice Act and looks forward to continuing our work together to pass this legislation either as stand-alone legislation or ideally incorporated within comprehensive health care reform that addresses the needs of Americans for long-term services and supports.

Sincerely,



Michael Gamel-McCormick, Ph.D.
Board President & Associate Director
Center for Disability Studies
University of Delaware



George Jesien, Ph.D.
Executive Director
AUCD

● 1010 Wayne Avenue
Suite 920
Silver Spring, MD 20910
t: 301-588-8252
f: 301-588-2842
www.aucd.org

Michael Gamel-McCormick, PhD
President

Tamar Heller, PhD
President-Elect

William E. Kiernan, PhD
Past President

Royal P. Walker, Jr., JD
Past-Past President

Marion Taylor Baer, PhD, RD
Secretary

Daniel B. Crimmins, PhD
Treasurer

Lann E. Thompson, EdD
Council for Interdisciplinary Service

Gordon G. Richins, BS
Council on Community Advocacy

Kendall Corbett, BA
Council on Community Advocacy

Arnold Birenbaum, PhD
Council on Research and Evaluation

Barbara Wheeler, PhD
Multicultural Council

Mary Mercer, MS
National Community Education Directors Council

Judith M. Holt, PhD
National Training Directors Council

A. Anthony Antosh, EdD
Member at Large

Kathleen Braden, MD
Member at Large

Julie Anne Fodor, PhD
Member at Large

Charlie Lakin, PhD
Member at Large

Robert W. Marion, MD
Member at Large

George S. Jesien, PhD
Executive Director