

House Action on Health Care Reform Will Have Major Positive Impact on People with Disabilities and Families

SILVER SPRING, MD (March 22, 2010) — AUCD applauds the United States House of Representatives for passing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (HR 3590). “This landmark reform has incredible implications for the AUCD network and the communities we serve. Provisions to provide access; increase quality, affordability and community-based services; reduce disability health disparities; and prohibit discrimination based on health status, as well as those that focus on wellness and prevention, are all provisions that AUCD and other disability advocates have long fought for in the healthcare system. This historic legislation is a step forward for people with disabilities and their families, and I look forward to working along with others in the our network in the days, weeks and months ahead to ensure its proper implementation,” stated AUCD’s President, Tamar Heller, Director of the Institute on Disability and Human Development, the Illinois University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

This legislation will not only ensure that many individuals with disabilities will now have access to quality, affordable health care, but also includes two of AUCD’s major legislative priorities: the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) Act and the Community First Choice Option.

The CLASS Act, championed by the late Senator Ted Kennedy, will establish a new national insurance program financed by voluntary payroll deductions to provide 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.

The Community Choice Act, long supported and reintroduced by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Representative Danny Davis (D-IL), will improve Medicaid to provide individuals with disabilities

and seniors an equal choice of receiving home and community-based services in Medicaid. This legislation will help correct the institutional bias by providing the option to states to provide community-based personal attendant services and supports benefits within Medicaid.

“These two major provisions, along with the provisions to improve access and quality of health care, will result in dramatic improvements to the quality of life for people living with disabilities of all ages. It will also provide options and support to States that want to do the right thing -- provide quality supports and services in the community-- but are struggling with huge budget deficits and need assistance in doing so,” said Kim Musheno, AUCD’s Legislative Director.

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.