

INTERFAITH DISABILITY ADVOCACY COALITION

c/o AAPD • 1629 K Street, NW • Washington, DC 20006

November 6, 2009

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned members of the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition (IDAC) and other religious and religiously-affiliated organizations, write to urge you to retain long term services and supports in health reform. The Community First Choice Option and the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports Act (CLASS Act) must be included in health reform to ensure that people with disabilities have access to critical long term services and supports that promote independence and dignity.

The Community First Choice Option would allow states to provide community-based attendant services and supports through a Medicaid state plan option to people with disabilities who are Medicaid eligible. Including the option in health reform will help to address Medicaid's institutional bias, which often forces people with disabilities to live in institutions rather than in their homes and communities. Institutionalization severs individuals from society, greatly limiting their ability to contribute economically, socially, politically and spiritually.

The CLASS Act creates a national, affordable, voluntary long term care insurance program. By participating in this program, individuals will be able to receive cash benefits for necessary supports without being forced to rely on Medicaid. The CLASS Act would result in important savings to Medicaid while providing participants with the ability to exercise personal responsibility and choose how their services and supports are provided.

The Community First Choice Option and the CLASS Act must be included in health reform. The shared values of our faiths are in conflict with public policy that limits the choices and opportunities for older adults and people with disabilities. These proposals are crucial steps in fulfilling the promise of the Americans with Disabilities Act to "assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency" for people with disabilities. They will help to make it possible for people with disabilities to continue contributing in their communities and congregations as well as to their nation.

Respectfully,

The American Baptist Home Mission Societies
Association of Jewish Family & Children's
Agencies
Council for Health and Human Service
Ministries of the United Church of Christ
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Hindu American Foundation
Islamic Society of North America
Jewish Council for Public Affairs

L'Arche USA
Lutheran Services in America
National Council of Jewish Women
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office
UJC/The Jewish Federations of North America
The Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association of
Congregations
United Methodist Church, General Board of
Church and Society

The mission of the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition (IDAC) is to mobilize the religious community to speak out and take action on disability policy issues with Congress, the President and Administration, and society at large.