



National Council on Disability

An independent federal agency making recommendations to the President and Congress to enhance the quality of life for all Americans with disabilities and their families.

November 17, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the National Council on Disability (NCD), I urge you to work with Congress to actively oppose repeal of the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) Program and continue moving forward on implementation.

Community-based long-term services and supports are absolutely essential to maintaining the health, independence, and community participation of individuals with disabilities. While currently approximately 10 million Americans have functional needs for such services, this figure will more than double in coming decades with the aging of the population. Few Americans have any economic security against the high costs of long-term services when they arise. Only 3% of working Americans have purchased private long-term care insurance; and most working individuals with disabilities are excluded from the private market due to underwriting practices. Our current financing of long-term services and supports relies almost exclusively on Medicaid which forces individuals to impoverish themselves and often denies choice to receive supports in their homes and communities.

The disability, aging and faith communities supported the CLASS Program and actively worked with Congressional leaders and the Administration to ensure its passage within the Affordable Care Act. They did so because they deeply understand the promise this program holds for improving the lives of millions of Americans and their families. The CLASS Program provides a structure for the country to better address the financing of long-term services and supports in a manner that is fiscally responsible and can produce significant savings to Medicaid.

We appreciate the critical support you provided for the CLASS Program prior to enactment of the Affordable Care Act. But now is not the time to cut off discussion and progress. While there are many challenging aspects of implementation, we believe there are viable paths forward. We commend the work the CLASS Office within the Department of Health and Human Services has done over the past 18 months. We are encouraged that the actuarial report presents a range of options to consider in designing plans that can be “actuarially sound and attractive.” Only through additional work and full engagement of stakeholders can we find the right paths. As a first step forward, we recommend that the Administration appoint the CLASS Independence

Advisory Council and Personal Care Attendants Workforce Advisory Panel as outlined in the Affordable Care Act.

Thank you for valuing the critical importance of this issue to the disability and aging communities. We look forward to working with you.

Respectfully Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan M. Young", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan M. Young, Ph.D., J.D.
Chairman, National Council on Disability