

With Congress now focusing on health care reform, I urge you to provide real health security by ensuring that long term supportive services are included in any and all reform proposals.

For persons with disabilities and chronically ill older Americans -- arguably the most vulnerable populations in the nation -- long-term services and supports are their primary unmet care need, and are critical to promoting health and preventing illness.

Real health care reform must address the largest coverage gap in our current system. While about 45 million Americans do not have medical insurance, over 250 million adult Americans lack any insurance for long-term services and supports. Although some of these services now are covered for low-income people eligible for Medicaid, many Americans simply do not have access to or cannot afford these services.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee have voted on a bipartisan basis to include provisions similar to the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) Act in their respective health care reform measures. These provisions would establish a national insurance trust to cover long-term services and supports on a personally responsible, fiscally sustainable basis. The system would be voluntary on an "opt-out" basis to make coverage as affordable as possible, and would be financed by premiums paid by participants. According to a preliminary Congressional Budget Office score, the CLASS Act provisions are sustainable over time, would reduce Medicaid spending and would reduce the health care reform package's scorable costs by \$59 billion over 10 years.

The CLASS Act would provide a fiscally-sound, sustainable alternative to our present welfare-based system of long-term services and supports funding. Please support the inclusion of these provisions in health care reform legislation.

Sincerely,