

INTERFAITH DISABILITY ADVOCACY COALITION

c/o AAPD • 2013 H Street, NW, 5th Floor • Washington, DC 20006

August 1, 2012

Dear State Legislator:

We, the undersigned members of the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition (IDAC) and other religious and religiously-affiliated organizations, urge you to support participation of your State in the expanded Medicaid program authorized by Public Law 111-148, the Affordable Care Act. This program will provide many persons with disabilities, who have incomes near the poverty level, with the health and long term care services they need to live independent, productive lives in their communities.

IDAC is a nonpartisan coalition of more than 25 national faith-based organizations including representatives from the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Hindu traditions, with a mission of mobilizing the religious community to speak out and take action on disability policy issues. IDAC is a diverse coalition of organizations whose core spiritual values affirm the rights and dignity of people with disabilities.

The shared values of our faiths lead us to support programs such as Medicaid, which now gives more than 8 million people with disabilities the dignity and independence they need to continue contributing to their communities and congregations.

Medicaid supports essential health and long term care services that provide a vital lifeline for people with disabilities. To cite a few examples:

- For people with a variety of physical disabilities, such as spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, cerebral palsy, or amputations, Medicaid provides access to wheelchairs, prosthetic devices, and assistive technology.
- For people with epilepsy, mental illness, HIV, and a variety of other conditions, Medicaid is often the only source of access to essential prescription drug coverage.
- For many people with cognitive and other disabilities, Medicaid is an important source of long-term services and supports, which are tools to live and work in the community and to avoid costly, segregated nursing homes and institutions.
- For children with disabilities, Medicaid provides access to the Early and Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment benefit, which requires screening for, and treatment of developmental, vision, dental, mental health, and other medical problems.

The Affordable Care Act extended Medicaid to approximately 17 million persons with incomes below 133% of the Federal Poverty Level, \$11,170 a year for a single person. Many of the new enrollees are people with disabilities. We know that millions of people with disabilities, and those who love them, now live with the misery of inadequate care and the fear of an unknown future. The expansion of Medicaid offers an opportunity to close gaps in access to health care and bring 17 million more Americans into a system of care that can provide positive outcomes in health and quality of life.

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.

Under the Supreme Court's recent decision on the Affordable Care Act, each State must decide whether to participate in an expanded Medicaid program. We urge all States to do so.

The Affordable Care Act provides that most of the expense of expanding the Medicaid program will be borne by the federal government; 100% in the first three years, scaling down to 90% after six years. We recognize the challenges faced by public officials in making budgetary decisions. We hope that strong federal support for the Medicaid expansion will be an incentive for all States to participate and be able to provide health and long term care services to some of our nation's most vulnerable citizens. Without the Medicaid expansion, many people with disabilities will remain uninsured and rely on emergency rooms and other services, which ultimately will lead to higher health care and insurance costs for others.

Medicaid already provides vital support to more than 8 million persons with disabilities, making it possible for them to contribute to their communities and congregations. We urge you to support participation of your State in the expansion of Medicaid, an important step in strengthening our nation's capacity for leaving no person behind in achieving the promise of American opportunity.

If you or your staff would like discuss these issues in more detail, please contact Ginny Thornburgh, IDAC Convener, at (202) 521-4311. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

African Methodist Episcopal Church Connectional Health Commission

American Baptist Churches USA

American Baptist Home Mission Societies

American Muslim Health Professionals

Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies

Disability Concerns, Reformed Church in America

Disciples Home Missions Family and Children's Ministries

Disciples Justice Action Network

The Episcopal Church

Friends Committee on National Legislation

General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church

Global Deaf Muslim

Islamic Society of North America

Jewish Council for Public Affairs

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The Jewish Federations of North America

L'Arche USA

Muslim Public Affairs Council

National Catholic Partnership on Disability

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

National Council of Jewish Women

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Rabbinical Assembly

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

Union for Reform Judaism

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

United Church of Christ, Council for Health and Human Service Ministries

United Church of Christ, Disabilities Ministries Board

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

Women's Rabbinic Network

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