



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

July 2, 2014

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chair, Committee on Finance
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
Ranking Member, Committee on Finance
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Hatch:

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) write to express our opposition to proposals to eliminate or reduce concurrent Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits as a partial offset for funding the Highway Trust Fund under the Preserving American's Transit and Highways Act (PATH Act).

The SSDI and UI programs were established for different purposes and largely serve different populations. Receiving UI and SSDI concurrently is legal and appropriate. This has been the long-standing position of the Social Security Administration and of the courts. Individuals qualify for SSDI because they have significant disabilities that prevent work at or above Social Security's Substantial Gainful Activity level (earnings of \$1,070 per month, in 2014). At the same time, the Social Security Act encourages SSDI beneficiaries to attempt to work, and those who have done so at a low level of earnings but have lost their job through no fault of their own may qualify for UI. As highlighted in a 2012 Government Accountability Office report, less than one percent of individuals served by SSDI and UI receive concurrent benefits, and the average quarterly concurrent benefit in fiscal year 2010 totaled only about \$3,300.

These extremely modest benefits can be a lifeline to workers with disabilities who receive them, and their families – and as permitted by law are not fraud or improper payments. We are deeply concerned by any prospect of worsening the economic security of workers with disabilities and their families. In addition, proposed cuts to concurrent benefits single out SSDI beneficiaries with disabilities, treating them differently from other workers under the UI program, and have the potential to create disincentives to work for SSDI beneficiaries.

Finally, any changes to our nation's Social Security system should be carefully considered as part of discussions about how to strengthen Social Security. Benefit cuts to Social Security should not be considered as offsets for unrelated programs.

Although a strong and accessible transportation network is critical to people with disabilities, the undersigned CCD members strongly oppose proposals to partially offset the costs of financing the Highway Trust Fund by eliminating or reducing concurrent SSDI and UI benefits. We urge the Committee

on Finance to reject Thune Amendment #1, Thune Amendment #2, and any similar proposals as part of your consideration of the PATH Act.

Sincerely,

ACCSES

American Council of the Blind

American Foundation for the Blind

American Network of Community Options and Resources

The Arc of the United States

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs

Association of University Centers on Disabilities

The Attention Deficit Disorder Association - (ADDA)

Autism National Committee

Autistic Self-Advocacy Network

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Brain Injury Association of America

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

Easter Seals

Goodwill Industries

Health & Disability Advocates

Lupus Foundation of America

Institute for Educational Leadership

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association of Disability Representatives

National Association of State Head Injury Administrators

National Center for Learning Disabilities

National Council on Independent Living

National Disability Rights Network

National Down Syndrome Congress

National Multiple Sclerosis Society

National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives

National Respite Coalition

Paralyzed Veterans of America

SourceAmerica

The Special Needs Alliance

United Spinal Association

World Institute on Disability

CC: Members, U.S. Senate Committee on Finance