



January 9, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
United States Senate
731 Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities are writing to express our opposition to proposals to eliminate or reduce Social Security Disability Insurance (DI) benefits for individuals who concurrently receive Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits as a partial offset for extending the Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) program.

The DI and UI programs have been established for different purposes and largely serve different populations. As highlighted in a 2012 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), less than one percent of individuals served by the DI and UI programs receive concurrent benefits.

At the same time, receiving UI and DI is not inconsistent. This has been the long-standing position of the Social Security Administration and of the courts. Individuals who do receive concurrent benefits do so because they have significant disabilities that make them eligible for DI, and because they have also attempted to work at a low level of earnings but have lost their job through no fault of their own. According to the GAO, the average quarterly concurrent benefit in fiscal year 2010 was about \$1,100 in DI and \$2,200 in UI for a quarterly average of about \$3,300 in total benefits.

These benefits can be a lifeline to workers with disabilities who receive them, and their families. We are concerned about any cuts to these already modest benefits, and about the prospect of worsening the economic security of workers with disabilities and their families at a time when the economy continues to struggle.

Finally, we believe that changes to our nation's Social Security system should be carefully considered as part of discussions about how to strengthen Social Security, and that benefit cuts to Social Security should not be considered as part of offsets for other important benefit programs.

In closing, while we strongly support extending the EUC program, we oppose amendments to partially offset the costs by eliminating or reducing concurrent DI and UI benefits. Thank you for your ongoing leadership on behalf of people with disabilities across the United States.

Sincerely,

The Arc of the United States
Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Autism National Committee
Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (ASAN)
Brain Injury Association of America
Easter Seals
Goodwill Industries International
Health and Disability Advocates
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
National Disability Rights Network
National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives
TASH
United Cerebral Palsy
United Spinal Association