The Honorable Christopher Coons  
127A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  

Dear Senator Coons –

It is the pleasure of the undersigned member organizations of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) to provide you with this letter of support for the Stop Taxing Death and Disability Act of 2017. CCD is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society.

Congress recognized in 1965 that having a work limiting disability can make it impossible for an individual to pay back their student loans in some circumstances and as a result passed the provision allowing for the discharge of student loans due to total and permanent disability. Unfortunately, this discharge is currently treated as income for tax purposes creating thousands and sometimes tens of thousands of dollars of tax liability for an individual whose loans are discharged. This makes no sense. An individual with a disability who cannot afford to pay back their student loans cannot afford to pay back a tax debt either.

In addition, the discharge being treated as income for tax purposes can cause the person with a disability to become ineligible for programs and services the individual relies upon to live independently. For example, it might make someone ineligible for certain Medicaid coverage or premium tax subsidies for the purchase of health insurance through the Marketplaces under the Affordable Care Act because those programs use modified adjusted gross income to determine eligibility. This is true for any local, state, or Federal program that uses the income reported on tax forms for eligibility purposes. Individuals receiving Social Security Disability Insurance payments can also have those vital but very modest benefits garnished to satisfy a tax debt potentially leaving an individual without sufficient income with which to pay for basic necessities such as housing and food.

Thank you for introducing this legislation to no longer treat student loan discharges on the basis of total and permanent disability as income for tax purposes. We look forward to working with you to get this bill passed so that people with disabilities are no longer hurt by the unintended economic consequences of utilizing this discharge provision.
Sincerely,

ACCSES  
American Association of People with Disabilities  
American Foundation for the Blind  
American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health  
Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation  
Community Legal Services of Philadelphia  
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund  
Goodwill Industries International  
Justice in Aging  
Lutheran Services in America Disability Network  
Mental Health America  
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities  
National Association of Disability Representatives  
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators  
National Disability Institute  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Down Syndrome Congress  
National Organization of Social Security Claimants’ Representatives (NOSSCR)  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
Parent to Parent USA  
Special Needs Alliance  
The Arc of the United States  
United Cerebral Palsy  
United Spinal Association