



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

FEDERAL PUBLIC POLICIES CAN AMELIORATE DISABILITY

Federal policies that provide access to health care, adequate nutrition and safe housing may prevent diminished health and ameliorate disability.

A forum was held at the Brookings Institution on “Economic Mobility in America.” Forum presenters and participants were representatives of the major political parties.

Summary

The representative of a major political party expressed concerns for provisions for vulnerable population in a free market employment environment. Many persons with disabilities, of which there are 54 million in America, dream of a living wage with health benefits, income security and a self-sufficient life. However, for the most part, people with disabilities have lost employment opportunities and earnings, even in the booming economy of the 1990s. Less than 20% of persons with disabilities of working age are currently in the workforce and 40% to 65% of those who work do so at sub-poverty wages. Most of these workers don't have health insurance. In addition, there are nearly 40 million people in America who live below the poverty line, and there has been a dramatic increase of persons who live below 50% of the poverty line (i.e. 43% or approximately 16 million people).

Disability Prevention Issues

Lack of timely health care can diminish health, and diminished health may lead to disability. Of the 54 million people with disabilities in the U.S., approximately 12 million persons with disabilities receive health care through Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability. Thus, it is unknown how approximately 20 million persons with disabilities receive health care. There may be over 10 million eligible non-participating impoverished persons in the Medicaid program. All people in America should receive timely medical care to prevent diminished health that can lead to disability.

Intervention

A letter was written to the representative of major political party that indicated there was little relationship between economic mobility and health and prevention of disability of impoverished persons. The representative was encouraged to seek out a greater focus on the economic mobility of impoverished vulnerable populations to reach the poverty line without health insurance and adequate nutrition and housing.

Recommendation

Federal administration and congresses should include policies that address the human needs of vulnerable populations to receive adequate health care, nutrition and housing to prevent diminished health.