



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CORRECT PROBLEM PLAGUED MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG
PROGRAM NOW, SAYS NATION'S LARGEST DISABILITY COALITION**

WASHINGTON (February 15, 2006) – During a conference call with reporters today, the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), a coalition of 105 national disability organizations, released a list of short-term corrective measures for the problem-plagued Medicare Part D prescription drug program, which the Bush Administration began implementing on January 1, 2006.

“The Bush Administration’s flawed implementation of the new Medicare prescription drug program has caused tremendous problems for people with disabilities nationwide, especially those who are dually eligible under Medicare and Medicaid. Far too many citizens with disabilities – many of whom live in severe poverty – have gone without essential medications or have been punished by improper charges.” said Curt Decker, Chair of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities and Executive Director of the National Disability Rights Network. “We urge the Administration to immediately implement CCD’s recommendations to ensure that the cracks in this program are filled.”

The CCD and its Health Task Force have worked with the Bush Administration’s Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to try to ensure a smooth transition for people with disabilities, including 6.4 million dually eligible beneficiaries (who received Medicaid’s prescription drug coverage prior to January 1 when their coverage was supposed to switch to Medicare Part D). However, since too many have fallen through the cracks during the implementation process, the CCD released a list of measures to correct the pitfalls in program. The measures include:

- **Reimburse Improper Charges to Individuals Immediately**
Drug plans, under CMS oversight, must immediately reimburse improper charges, including full payments for prescriptions and erroneously high co-payments.
- **Guarantee Reimbursement to Pharmacies**
CMS must guarantee reimbursement to pharmacists who dispense medically necessary drugs to dual-eligibles.

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- **Codify CMS Policies on Covered Drugs**
CMS must clarify and codify its policies on drug coverage, especially in six key drug classes including anti-depressants, anti-psychotics, anti-convulsants, anti-retrovirals, antineoplastics, and immunosuppressants
- **Make Outreach Accessible and Provide Trained Staff**
CMS must make all outreach, education, appeals, and complaint processes accessible, and provide trained staff to assist people with cognitive, physical and sensory disabilities.
- **Policing and Punishing Negligent Drug Plans**
CMS must exercise its enforcement authority and impose appropriate sanctions against any negligent Medicare Part D drug plan.

More details about these measures and how they should be implemented can be found at www.c-c-d.org.

“We’re extremely concerned about the impact of this program on dual eligibles because they have more extensive health care needs and lower incomes than the rest of the Medicare population,” said Kirsten Beronio, CCD Health Task Force Co-Chair and Senior Director of Government Affairs at the National Mental Health Association. “In the last 45 days, many of our worst fears have come true. Several hundred thousand duals were not properly enrolled even though they lost their Medicaid coverage and were inappropriately charged high co-pays, deductibles and even the full cost of their medications, which they couldn’t afford. And still more did not receive the transitional coverage they’d been promised.”

About the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities is a coalition of 105 national consumer, provider and advocacy organizations working together to advocate for national public policy that ensures the self determination, independence, empowerment, integration, and inclusion of the 54 million children and adults with disabilities living in the United States. For more information, visit www.c-c-d.org.

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