



## News Release

For Immediate Release

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### **Diabetes Advocates Across the Country Urge Senate HELP Committee to Reject Enzi Health Insurance Legislation; Bill Fails to Protect Vital Diabetes Coverage**

*S.1955 will jeopardize lifesaving coverage protections for millions with diabetes by allowing health insurers to circumvent existing laws in 46 states that guarantee coverage for diabetes medications, supplies and training*

Alexandria, VA (March 14, 2006) – Diabetes advocates from across the country have contacted their United States senators in the past week to express their strong opposition to proposed federal legislation that would enable health insurers to bypass existing state health insurance regulations. In doing so, the “Health Insurance Marketplace Modernization and Affordability Act” (S. 1955) would result in the loss of critical health coverage guarantees for millions of people with diabetes. Forty-six states and the District of Columbia require insurers to provide coverage for diabetes supplies, medication, equipment and education, but S. 1955 would undermine those basic protections. When the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, chaired by bill sponsor Senator Michael Enzi, marked up the legislation on Wednesday, March 8, the committee failed on a 10-10 vote to pass an amendment that would have protected diabetes coverage guarantees. Sen. Mike DeWine (R-OH) was the only Republican to support the amendment, joining the eight Democrats and one Independent on the Committee. The American Diabetes Association urges DeWine and his colleagues to oppose the overall bill when the HELP Committee resumes its markup Wednesday, March 15, as it still fails to protect diabetes coverage.

“The bill before the HELP Committee still fails to protect vital state diabetes coverage guarantees that were enacted over the past decade with the bipartisan support of legislatures, governors, and state insurance commissioners,” said L. Hunter Limbaugh, the ADA’s Chair for Advocacy, whose daughter has type 1 diabetes. “Taking away these protections will inevitably result in poor diabetes management among the millions who will soon lose the guarantee of life-saving diabetes tools. An increase in diabetes prevalence coupled with poor diabetes management, ultimately will increase the burden on the nation’s already strapped healthcare system.”

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## **American Diabetes Association/Enzi Legislation**

### **Page 2**

The American Diabetes Association is committed to ensuring that the 20.8 million children and adults in the U.S. with diabetes have access to the health coverage they need to manage the disease and prevent its serious and costly complications, including heart disease and stroke, kidney disease, blindness and amputations. A critically important component of this effort has been the consumer protections in 46 states requiring insurers to provide adequate coverage for diabetes supplies, equipment and education. Those protections have been vital to millions of people with diabetes. In attempting to provide much-needed relief to small business owners, S.1955 would make changes that would impact all state-regulated plans, and would result in millions of Americans with diabetes losing their guarantee of diabetes coverage.

The cost of diabetes requirements on health insurance premiums has been studied by numerous states and has proven to have an insignificant effect on the overall cost of monthly health insurance premiums. Louisiana, for example, found that their diabetes requirement accounted for a mere .006% of monthly premiums. After conducting a comprehensive analysis of Utah's diabetes mandate, state legislators chose to strengthen their state law, doing away with a sunset clause that would abolish the diabetes requirement if they found the cost too burdensome.

“At a time when diabetes has become an epidemic in this country, we should be doing more – not less – when it comes to diabetes health coverage,” Limbaugh added. “States have taken the initiative to provide vital diabetes coverage for people in their state. Unfortunately, this legislation would strike a blow to those efforts. While the American Diabetes Association shares the concern for helping small businesses provide health insurance to their employees, we strongly believe that this legislation is not the answer.”

Nearly 21 million Americans have diabetes, up from 18.2 million in 2003. One in three Americans, and one in two minorities, born in 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime. The cost of diabetes in the United States in 2002 was at least \$132 billion; one in ten healthcare dollars is spent on diabetes and its complications.

The American Diabetes Association is the nation's leading voluntary health organization supporting diabetes research, information and advocacy. The Association's advocacy efforts include helping to combat discrimination against people with diabetes; advocating for the increase of federal diabetes research and programs; and improved access to, and quality of, healthcare for people with diabetes. The Association's mission is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes. Founded in 1940, the Association provides service to hundreds of communities across the country. For more information please call the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383) or visit [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org). Information from both these sources is available in English and Spanish.