

News Release

For Immediate Release

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American Diabetes Association Urges Senate to Protect Diabetes Coverage; Reject Fundamentally Flawed S.1955

Proposed legislation still jeopardizes lifesaving coverage protections for millions with diabetes

Alexandria, VA (May 11, 2006) – Over the past several months, tens of thousands of Americans with diabetes have contacted their United States senators to express their concerns about a federal small business health bill that ultimately would jeopardize state regulations that guarantee coverage for diabetes supplies, medication and education. Today, the American Diabetes Association reiterated its strong opposition to the “Health Insurance Marketplace Modernization Act” (S.1955), as the bill before the U.S. Senate still fails to protect the health coverage that millions of Americans rely upon to manage the disease and prevent its serious and costly complications. 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. The U.S. Senate is expected to have a procedural cloture vote on S.1955 sometime Thursday, and the Association urges the Senate to vote against cloture.

“The American Diabetes Association believes that the proposed approach is fundamentally flawed and must be opposed in all forms in order to protect your constituents with diabetes,” said Lawrence T. Smith, Chair of the Board of the American Diabetes Association. “The Association stands ready to work with Congress on future attempts to expand affordable, adequate and accessible health insurance to small businesses and other Americans who are uninsured and underinsured. But this bill is not the answer.”

Earlier this week, Senators heard from Nicole Pedone, an Ohio native, who developed type 1 diabetes at age 10 and subsequently lost her eyesight in 1998 because she did not have adequate health insurance. Pedone told Senators that because she didn't have the means to control her diabetes when she initially developed the disease, today her health care costs are covered by Medicaid and Medicare, meaning taxpayers are picking up her health costs.

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Diabetes Information

call 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)
online www.diabetes.org
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The Mission of the American

Diabetes Association is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes.

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Currently, Ohio is one of four states that does not require insurers and small businesses to cover many of the essential tools needed to manage the disease and stay healthy. Pedone warned that individuals in the 46 states that do have coverage requirements would face a nightmare similar to her situation if coverage protections were lost under S.1955.

Despite attempts to change the bill to increase its likelihood of passage, the bill still would allow plans sold in the state-regulated insurance market to circumvent state benefit protections. In addition, the rating structure will still have a significant impact on Americans with diabetes and other chronic diseases, as they will see a spike in insurance premiums.

“Your constituents with diabetes each benefit from dozens of state laws – which range from the mechanical aspects of insurance regulation and administration to laws mandating coverage for life-sustaining insulin. Any pre-emption or weakening of these state laws is a major threat to the well-being and lives of people with diabetes and should not be acceptable to the U.S. Senate,” Smith said. “Accordingly, we ask Senators to stand with us in full opposition to S. 1955, no matter which cosmetic changes may be proposed on the Floor.”

Nearly 21 million Americans have diabetes, up from 18.2 million in 2003. If present trends continue, one in three Americans, and one in two minorities, born in 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime. The cost of diabetes in the U.S. 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. Information from both these sources is available in English and Spanish.

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