



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Statement of the American Diabetes Association on the Passage in the Senate HELP Committee of Senator Enzi's Health Insurance Legislation; Would Jeopardize Lifesaving Coverage Protections for Millions with Diabetes

Alexandria, VA (March 15, 2006) – L. Hunter Limbaugh, Chair of the American Diabetes Association's National Advocacy Committee and the parent of a daughter who has type 1 diabetes, issued the following statement in response to today's passage, in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, of legislation that will enable health insurers to bypass existing state health insurance regulations. The "Health Insurance Marketplace Modernization and Affordability Act" (S. 1955) will 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 will undermine those basic protections. Last week, the HELP Committee failed to approve an amendment that would have protected state diabetes coverage guarantees.

"Today's vote is a setback for our efforts to ensure that the 20.8 million Americans with diabetes have the health coverage they need to manage the disease and prevent its serious complications, including heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, blindness, and amputation. As the full Senate considers this legislation, diabetes advocates from across the country will make sure that their Senators understand the negative consequences it would have on diabetes care.

"At a time when diabetes has become an epidemic in this country, we simply cannot afford to eliminate the diabetes health coverage guarantees that 46 states and the District of Columbia have wisely taken the initiative to provide. It has been the Association's experience that without these protections, state-regulated insurers often do not provide adequate diabetes coverage. When that happens, it is not just people with diabetes who will suffer, but our already over-burdened health care system. We urge Senators who are inclined to support S.1955 that they insist it be amended to protect and honor vital state diabetes coverage."

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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 if present trends continue. 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. Information from both these sources is available in English and Spanish.

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