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U.S. Catholic Bishops, NCPD, and the Catholic Health Association Support Bill to Expand Community Living Supports under Medicaid

Washington, DC – The National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) has joined with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA) to support the Medicaid Community-Based Attendant Services and Supports Act of 2005 (MiCASSA), S. 401/H.R. 910.

In a September 13, 2006 letter to the bill’s sponsors Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, chairman of the bishops’ Domestic Policy Committee, CHA President and CEO Sr. Carol Keehan, DC, and NCPD Board Chair Jerry Freewalt, said, “With the services that MiCASSA would make available, more people with disabilities will be able to move from institutional care to lives of independence in their communities. The legislation will give them the choices and control over their lives they deserve. It will also increase the ability of people with disabilities to fulfill the duty we all share, to contribute to the common good through work, service and participation in the community.” A copy of the letter can be viewed on NCPD’s website at <http://www.ncpd.org/MiCASSA.htm>.

Mr. Freewalt, NCPD Executive Director Janice Benton, Kathleen Curran, Interim Director of Domestic Social Policy for the USCCB, and Lisa Atchison Smith, Senior Director of Advocacy and Federal Affairs for CHA met with a small group of representatives of ADAPT, a grassroots disability advocacy organization, to discuss the legislation and the impact that it will have on the lives of thousands of people with disabilities. Following this meeting they spoke to ADAPT members who had traveled to Washington, D.C. from throughout the country to meet with Administration leaders and Congress to urge support for the bill. Ms. Curran commended participants for their advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities and for their tireless work on behalf of the legislation. Ms. Smith explained that “the Catholic Health Association has long supported community based services for elders and people with disabilities.” Mr. Freewalt, who had traveled from Columbus, Ohio to meet with the group, stated that “the National Catholic Partnership on Disability is concerned with the dignity of every human person, including everyone assembled in this room. NCPD supports MiCASSA because it allows people to live in dignity, in their own homes.” Ms. Benton added, “We support MiCASSA because it provides a range of options to people with disabilities and their families to select the care that best suits their needs.” She went on to pledge the support of NCPD and its network of diocesan directors of disability ministry in working for passage of MiCASSA.

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NCPD was established by the U.S. bishops in 1982 to advocate for welcome and justice for people with disabilities and their families within the Catholic Church and their communities. The USCCB is an assembly of the Catholic Church hierarchy who work together to coordinate and promote Catholic activities in the United States, and to organize and conduct religious, charitable, and social welfare work at home and abroad. The CHA, founded in 1915, supports the Catholic health ministry's pursuit of the strategic directions of mission, ethics, and advocacy. As the nation's largest group of not-for-profit sponsors, systems, and facilities, the ministry is committed to improving the health status of communities and creating quality and compassionate health care that works for everyone.