

## Re. Prosthetic and Orthotic Parity Act

March 10, 2009

Dear Members of Congress,

The undersigned organizations would like to thank you for advancing the prosthetic parity efforts in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. We respectfully request your continued leadership in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress as we work to advance parity legislation that would assure fairness and equity in the insurance benefits of people with limb loss and other complex, disabling conditions.

People needing either prosthetic or orthotic care have been subject to the same unfortunate efforts by some insurers to profoundly limit coverage availability. We are asking for your support in advancing legislation that would not only address the needs of people with limb loss, but also those with significant, enduring limb impairment. For example, individuals with cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis all can have complex orthotic bracing needs.

In return for premiums paid for group health insurance, consumers expect to be provided coverage in the case of disabling conditions or catastrophic injuries. Sadly, without legislation to ensure coverage, many individuals are facing discouraging obstacles when trying to obtain the care they need to reach their full potential.

The biggest concern anybody has about passing a parity bill is cost. People fear that big jumps in the cost of insurance will reduce access to healthcare. None of us want to see health insurance costs pushed beyond the reach of the average consumer.

A recent report put out by Morrison Informatics, using data from the Medicare DME claims files and a commercial sample, found that the estimated per beneficiary per month premium increase to cover all claims would be 30 cents for prosthetics and 32 cents for orthotics. The cost of providing adequate care to people with disabling conditions is nominal in relation to the impact on the lives of the individuals, as well as the savings in long-term medical costs.

Without appropriate prosthetic and orthotic care, many people with complex, disabling conditions are at risk of developing dangerous and costly secondary complications. Furthermore, the delay in appropriate care has a profound impact on the ability of individuals to maintain and enhance function, become and remain independent and to reach their full potential. The subsequent cost to the healthcare system far exceeds that of providing prosthetic care.

- For children with spina bifida, access to a custom orthotic device impacts both their short- and long-term mobility, their muscle strength, and overall quality of life. As they mature, the orthotic devices allow them to maintain their maximum level of functionality.
- The purpose of custom orthotic devices for people with cerebral palsy is to protect, such as stabilizing a fracture during healing; to prevent deformity, such as stretching braces worn while the person sleeps, to help prevent muscle contractures; and to improve function. This can help children with cerebral palsy achieve maximum potential in growth and development.
- Those with limb loss can and want to regain the quality of their lives. Prosthetic devices and related services enable amputees to continue working and attain levels of function that were not possible in years past.

We urge your support of the *Prosthetic and Orthotic Parity Act*. This will help ensure that those Americans facing limb loss and disabling conditions are not denied the needed services and devices that keep them mobile and productive in their communities and homes.

Sincerely,

Amputee Coalition of America

Alpha One

American Academy of Neurology Professional Association

American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

American Association on Health and Disability

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics

American Diabetes Association

American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs

Board for Orthotist/Prosthetist Certification

Brain Injury Association of America

Center for Medicare Advocacy

Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

Easter Seals

Long Island Center for Independent Living, Inc.

National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics

National Association of Social Workers

National Commission on Orthotic & Prosthetic Education

National Disability Rights Network

National Spinal Cord Injury Association

Orthotic and Prosthetic Alliance

Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America

Spina Bifida Association

The Arc of the United States

United Cerebral Palsy

United Spinal Association