



NACDD Celebrates the 27th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act

WASHINGTON – Today, persons with disabilities, their family and friends in the United States celebrate the 27th anniversary of passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). It is a landmark piece of legislation that has enabled all people with disabilities to be recognized and entitled to the same civil rights as people without disabilities. Senator Tom Harkin called the ADA the “emancipation proclamation for people with disabilities.”

The ADA is built upon four pillars: full participation, independent living, equality of opportunity, and economic self-sufficiency. Significant progress has been made in ensuring people with disabilities can realize the same rights as people without disabilities, to not experience discrimination in education, employment, transportation, housing and numerous other areas of community life. Nonetheless, there is still much work to be done to break down environmental, attitudinal and other barriers to meeting these goals.

Unfortunately, 27 years ago, noticeably absent from the passage of the ADA were protections for persons with disabilities from discrimination in acute and long-term healthcare. All of us will someday need to access the healthcare system whether to prevent illness, treat an injury or to provide long-term supports for a disability. None of us knows when we will need to access the system, but we all know when that time comes, we want comprehensive, affordable, and quality coverage and benefits in our healthcare.

Unfortunately, until 2010, people with disabilities were not guaranteed that they would not be discriminated against in accessing healthcare. The passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), for the first time really addressed the healthcare needs of people with disabilities. While we know the ACA is imperfect and can be improved to meet everyone’s needs, it was the start of addressing the need for a critical protection from discrimination for persons with disabilities. This progress must continue.

As we celebrate the ADA’s 27th Anniversary, let’s remember that the pillars of the ADA can only stand tall and strong when we all work together—those with and without disabilities—to continue shaping our communities to become fully inclusive and welcoming to all in all aspects of life. NACDD calls on Congress and the Administration to work to ensure that persons with disabilities do not lose access to healthcare coverage and benefits for acute and long-term care. Now is the time to work in a bipartisan manner to improve the healthcare system. The ADA was passed as a bipartisan piece of legislation, that tradition should continue as the Senate debates changes to the ACA.

NACDD serves as the national voice of the 56 state and territorial Councils on Developmental Disabilities. We support Councils in implementing the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act and promote the interests and rights of people with developmental disabilities and their families.