



December 11, 2017

Dear Conference Committee Member,

As you consider the differences between the U.S. House and U.S. Senate tax bills, please ensure that provisions that negatively impact people with disabilities are removed from the final tax bill.

Easterseals is a national network of more than 70 leading nonprofit organizations with over 34,000 dedicated staff members who provide local services to help over one million individuals with disabilities and others to live, learn, work, and play in their communities. The Easterseals National Board of Directors that I chair approved [tax reform principles](#) earlier this year that focused on ensuring tax changes improve, not worsen, the lives of individuals with disabilities. Unfortunately, several of the current provisions in the tax reform bills fail to meet this do-no-harm standard.

As a key negotiator, we ask that you remove or modify provisions that would negatively affect charitable giving, repeal a key Affordable Care Act (ACA) provision, and would end important deductions that improve the lives of individuals with disabilities and others with pre-existing conditions.

PREVENT CUTS TO CHARITABLE GIVING

Individuals with disabilities disproportionately rely on government-funded services and supports to maintain their health and live independently. Organizations like Easterseals use charitable donations to fill the growing gap that exists between services individuals with disabilities need and actual services available through government sources. Easterseals affiliates use the generous contributions from their community supporters to expand local services or to provide scholarships for individuals and families in need. For example, charitable giving represents 19.5 percent of the total operating budget of one Easterseals affiliate, which uses donated dollars to increase home care and speech and language services for families in its region.

Easterseals is very concerned about the impact the standard deduction changes (Senate Bill Section 11021/House Bill Section 1002) will have on charitable giving. A recent [Indiana University study](#) concluded that charitable giving will drop by up to 4.6 percent if these changes are enacted. The analysis found that the tax bill changes would affect charitable giving across all income levels, including low- and middle-income givers who often donate to local charities such as Easterseals. A cut in charitable giving of nearly 5 percent would mean one Easterseals affiliate would have to provide 1,500 fewer physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech language therapy visits next year that currently help children with disabilities. Ongoing threats to government programs make it even more crucial that we incentivize charitable giving for all Americans, regardless of how they file their taxes.

REMOVE REPEAL OF KEY AFFORDABLE CARE ACT PROVISION

Access to appropriate and high quality health care services is essential for people with disabilities and others with pre-existing conditions. Easterseals supported the ACA because the legislation achieved the goals set out by the Easterseals Board of Directors prior to the 2009 debate,

including non-discrimination protections and bans against annual and lifetime coverage limits that benefit individuals with disabilities and others with pre-existing conditions.

Easterseals was disappointed that the Senate tax bill included a provision (Section 11081) that begins the repeal of the ACA. The individual mandate is a key element toward achieving the coverage goals and maintaining the protections included in the ACA. Analysis from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [found](#) that repealing this ACA provision would lead to significant reductions in the number of Americans insured and cause individual market premiums to rise by 10 percent. Individuals with disabilities need certainty that the pre-existing condition protections, annual and lifetime limit bans, and access to comprehensive health coverage made available through the ACA will remain today and into the future.

PRESERVE DEDUCTIONS THAT IMPROVE THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Current tax law includes provisions to promote hiring of people with disabilities, increase accessibility of places of business, and that address high medical expenses to care for individuals with disabilities and older Americans. **Easterseals is troubled that the House tax bill places each of these important provisions in jeopardy.**

- House Bill Section 3404 ends a tax incentive for businesses who hire individuals with disabilities, veterans, and other jobseekers with significant barriers to employment;
- House Bill Section 1308 eliminates the medical expense deduction that many families use to help mitigate high out-of-pocket medical costs in a given year; and
- House Bill Section 3407 cancels a tax credit that helps small businesses absorb the costs associated with removing physical barriers and other improvements to make their business more accessible for individuals with disabilities.

Easterseals was pleased that the Senate bill does not include these tax code repeals. We ask the Conference Committee to reject these House provisions to ensure these incentives remain available to businesses and individuals.

Individuals with disabilities have a great stake in the decisions made by your Conference Committee. Please consider children and adults with disabilities and their ability to access essential care and supports, today and into the future, as you finalize the tax reform bill. Thank you for considering Easterseals' views.

Sincerely,



Joe Kern
Easterseals, Inc.
Chairman of the Board