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October 22, 2007

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
United States Senate
455 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: "*Arthur Woolweaver, Jr. Social Security Act Improvements for the Terminally Ill Act*"

Dear Senator Brown:

On behalf of the patients we serve, National Patient Advocate Foundation is pleased to offer its strong support for S. 2050, the "*Arthur Woolweaver, Jr. Social Security Act Improvements for the Terminally Ill Act*". This legislation eliminates the five-month waiting period in the disability insurance program for terminally ill patients, thus allowing access to necessary healthcare services at a critical time for patients.

As you know, National Patient Advocate Foundation (NPAF) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving access to healthcare services through policy reform. The advocacy activities of NPAF are informed and influenced by the experience of patients who receive counseling and case management services from our companion organization, Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF). Last year, PAF received more than 6 million contacts from patients throughout the United States seeking assistance for access to care issues resulting from diagnoses of a chronic, debilitating or life-threatening disease. Of those, 39,780 became full patient cases involving communications made by PAF staff on behalf of a patient in order to reach positive resolution.

Almost 50% of Medicare beneficiaries PAF served in 2006 were entitled to Medicare benefits as a result of a full disability determination. Additionally, over the last three years, the number of patients contacting PAF for Social Security Disability application assistance has remained the top Social Security assistance issue. Unfortunately, the five-month waiting period in the disability insurance program places many patients with serious illnesses in significant danger, particularly if no other health coverage is available to them and they are paying out-of-pocket for treatment. NPAF remains concerned that patients caught in the waiting period may delay or cease treatment due to financial pressures. This legislation will greatly impact sick patients at a critical time of their lives when they should be focusing their attention on treatment and recovery not financial issues. NPAF supports eliminating the five-month waiting period for terminally ill patients so they can receive the assistance they need during this grave time.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of patients. NPAF will continue to watch with interest the movement of this important legislation through the United States Congress.

If you have questions, or if we may provide you with additional information, please feel free to contact me or Amy Boivin at 202-347-8009.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Davenport-Ennis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'N'.

Nancy Davenport-Ennis
President & CEO