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**National Patient Advocate Foundation (NPAF) Commends SSA's New
"Compassionate Allowances Process"**
NPAF Joins Efforts to Accelerate Disability Determinations

WASHINGTON (October 28, 2008) – National Patient Advocate Foundation (NPAF) commends the Social Security Administration's new "Compassionate Allowances Process" for disability determinations, which will accelerate the processing of disability claims. Before announcing this proposal, Social Security held public hearings in the summer of 2008 to receive information from experts. NPAF, in collaboration with professional case managers and staff at the Patient Advocate Foundation, provided testimony and recommendations to SSA's panel.

Yesterday, Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security, announced the national rollout of the agency's program and stated that "getting benefits quickly to people with the most severe medical conditions is both the right and the compassionate thing to do." With this new program, rather than waiting for months, decisions will be made over the course of a few days. The "Compassionate Allowances Process" initiative will apply to 25 rare diseases and 25 cancers and could be expanded later. Some of these conditions include acute leukemia, bladder cancer, bone cancer, ependymoblastoma (Child Brain Tumor), kidney cancer (inoperable or unresectable), liver cancer, peritoneal mesothelioma, and stomach cancer, among others.

"This is a major accomplishment for patients suffering with chronic, debilitating, and life-threatening illnesses. For the 130 million Americans living with a chronic medical condition, having accelerated disability determinations can make a difference in their lives," said Davenport-Ennis. "With the "Compassionate Allowances Process" in place, patients will be able to receive more immediate, reliable care and benefits. We are thankful to the Social Security Administration and Commissioner Astrue for recognizing the need to improve the determinations process"

Patient Advocate Foundation professional case managers represent a broad cross section of healthcare specialties including advanced degree nurses, oncology nurse case managers, Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare specialists, coding and billing experts, pediatric specialists and licensed clinical social workers. The experiences of these case managers, who have served patients with severe medical conditions and provided services and information to more than 21 million people in America since 1996, reflect the hardship encountered

by patients and caregivers attempting to navigate the current Social Security disability system. These difficulties often result in lack of access to healthcare services, loss of all financial stability, and negative survival outcomes for these critically ill patients.

NPAF and its companion organization, Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF), support the adoption of this program to help reduce the waiting period for those with severe medical conditions. Many individuals may face intensive treatment due to a condition and then may be unable to perform their job duties, losing income on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. This program will streamline the claims process and will provide benefits more quickly. PAF's full report including the recommendations made to SSA is available at www.patientadvocate.org.

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About the National Patient Advocate Foundation

National Patient Advocate Foundation is a national non-profit organization providing the patient voice in improving access to, and reimbursement for, high-quality healthcare through regulatory and legislative reform at the state and federal levels, translating the experience of millions of patients who have been helped by our companion organization, Patient Advocate Foundation. For more information, visit www.npaf.org.