



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

March 22, 2012

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
U.S. House of Representatives
2367 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Schakowsky:

We the undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Housing Task Force are writing in support of the Inclusive Home Design Act of 2012. This legislation would require newly constructed single-family houses and townhouses that are built with federal assistance to include a minimum standard of visitability.

CCD is a coalition of over 100 national consumer, service provider, and professional organizations which advocates on behalf of people with disabilities and chronic conditions and their families.

People with disabilities should be able to visit friends, family, and coworkers without worrying that architectural barriers will exclude them from this important aspect of everyday life. Visitability is a design concept that allows people with disabilities to be a part of their neighborhoods and communities by integrating a minimum level of accessibility in housing units that are not covered by the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Although some communities have adopted laws that fill this gap by requiring visitability, the majority of newly constructed single-family houses and townhouses are not covered. Action is needed at the federal level to increase the number of visitable housing units.

The Inclusive Home Design Act has the potential to benefit communities of people beyond the disability community. As our nation's population ages, increasing numbers of people will experience mobility impairments. This legislation would permit people to "age in place." In addition, each year many people find themselves temporarily disabled through accidents or illnesses. A barrier-free entrance to their homes and an accessible bathroom on the main level could assist in their recovery by helping them to avoid further injury.

We commend your leadership in pursuing visitability legislation that will assist people with disabilities. We stand ready to work in partnership with you to ensure passage of the Inclusive Home Design Act. If you have any questions, please contact Heather Ansley, member of the CCD Housing Task Force, at (202) 556-2076, Ext. 7702 or by e-mail at hansley@vetsfirst.org.

Sincerely,

The Arc of the United States
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
The National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Rights Network
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Technical Assistance Collaborative
VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association