

# DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION RESEARCH COALITION

1501 M STREET, N.W. SUITE 700 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

November 29, 2016

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for Section 2040 in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act

Dear Chairman Alexander,

On behalf of the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Coalition (DRRC), thank you for including Section 2040, “Improving Medical Rehabilitation Research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH),” in the “21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act” released on November 25, 2016.

Section 2040 is virtually identical to S.800, the “Enhancing the Stature and Visibility of Medical Rehabilitation Research at the NIH Act,” that was approved unanimously by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee in February 2016. As you know, this bipartisan legislation would advance rehabilitation science at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and improve the care provided to people with disabling injuries, illnesses, and conditions.

Publication of the NIH’s report, “Blue Ribbon Panel on Medical Rehabilitation Research,” was the impetus for the original legislation. The panel concluded that rehabilitation research is not thriving at NIH in part because the NIH had not updated its research plan for the conduct and support of medical rehabilitation research since 1993.

Section 2040 enhances coordination within NIH and with other agencies to update and streamline rehabilitation research priorities. It specifies that the research plan must be updated every five years; provides for an annual progress report; promotes the development of guidelines by NIH governing the co-funding of medical rehabilitation; and includes a definition of medical rehabilitation research. Section 2040 contains extensive input from NIH and the disability and rehabilitation community and is expected to be budget neutral.

The DRRC is a coalition of 40 national non-profit organizations, including American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine, American Occupational Therapy Association, American Physical Therapy Association, Amputee Coalition of America, Association of Academic Physiatrists, Brain Injury Association of America, Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and RESNA, among others. As a coalition of national non-profit organizations committed to improving the science of disability, independent living, and rehabilitation, the DRRC seeks to maximize the return on the federal investment in disability, independent living, and rehabilitation research with the goal of improving the ability of Americans with disabilities to live and function as independently as possible.

Millions of Americans with disabilities, illnesses, and chronic conditions require medical rehabilitation to restore, maintain, or prevent deterioration of function. We stand in strong support of your work to advance this legislation toward final passage. Please let us know how else we might be of assistance in your efforts.

Sincerely,

The Disability and Rehabilitation Research Coalition (DRRC)

Academy of Spinal Cord Injury Professionals  
American Academy of Neurology  
American Academy of Orthotists & Prosthetists  
American Academy of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine  
American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association  
American Music Therapy Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Physical Therapy Association  
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association  
Amputee Coalition of America  
Association of Academic Physiatrists  
Association of Rehabilitation Nurses  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities  
Brain Injury Association of America  
Child Neurology Society  
Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation  
National Association for the Advancement Orthotics & Prosthetics  
National Association of Rehabilitation Research Training Centers  
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators  
National Multiple Sclerosis Society  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
RESNA  
United Spinal Association

cc: Majority Leader McConnell  
Minority Leader Reid  
Senator Schumer  
Senator Murray  
Speaker Ryan  
Minority Leader Pelosi  
Representative Upton  
Representative DeGette  
Representative Pallone