

Statement by Donna Meltzer
Chair, Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities
At Launch of Social Security Works
July 29, 2010

I am Donna Meltzer, Senior Director of Government Relations for the Epilepsy Foundation. I serve as chair of CCD, the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities. CCD is a coalition of national consumer, advocacy, provider, and professional organizations that work with and on behalf of the 54 million children and adults with disabilities and their families living in the United States.

I am here today to add CCD's voice to the effort to oppose any cuts to Social Security benefits, including increasing the retirement age, and to oppose any effort to privatize Social Security, in whole or in part. It is critical to know that people with disabilities and their families are found across Social Security's retirement, survivors and disability insurance programs. More than one-third of all monthly Social Security checks go to more than 20 million people who are not retirees.

Disability can affect anyone at any time, often unexpectedly. For individuals with disabilities and their families, Social Security is a basic economic lifeline that provides a guaranteed monthly payment for those who qualify. People can and do move among Social Security's retirement, survivors and disability insurance programs based on their work history, age or eligibility category. So at various points in their lives, people qualify for different types of Social Security insurance based on their own contributions or those made by spouses or parents.

CCD urges policymakers to look beyond simply the financial implications of changing Social Security. On behalf of CCD, I took the opportunity to provide testimony before the Fiscal Commission telling them that the budget deficit cannot, and must not, be balanced on the backs of people with disabilities and other vulnerable Americans. Social Security is not the cause of the deficit nor will cutting benefits solve the budget crisis. In fact, it will only serve to deepen the financial crisis that many people with disabilities face. Policymakers must understand the actual impact of any changes on people who need Social Security to pay for housing, food, clothing and other daily necessities.

We join Social Security Works to strengthen Social Security and to ensure that the program continues to meet the critical needs of people with disabilities and their families.