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The Honorable Paul W. Hodes
U.S. House of Representatives
506 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C 20515
Via fax – 202.225.2946

RE: H.R. 2851

Dear Congressman Hodes,

I am writing on behalf of the Disability Rights Legal Center (DRLC) to thank you for sponsoring H.R. 2851. This bill will allow college students to take a medically necessary leave of absence from school for up to one year, without losing their health insurance coverage.

At the DRLC's Cancer Legal Resource Center (CLRC), we have unique knowledge and experience with laws and legislation that impact the rights of cancer survivors, their families, friends, healthcare professionals, and employers. The DRLC, the nation's oldest cross-disability rights organization, has worked to implement the civil rights of people with disabilities for over 30 years. Our mission is to promote the rights of people with disabilities and the public interest in an awareness of those rights by providing legal and related services. The CLRC, one of the programs of the DRLC, provides free and confidential information and resources on cancer-related legal issues through our national Telephone Assistance Line and national outreach and education efforts.

The New Hampshire college student, for whom this critical legislation is named, is a tragic icon of why college students need this protection. Michelle Morse was diagnosed with colon cancer, but her family's health insurance would not cover her if she was not a full-time student, so she was forced to take a full class schedule while undergoing chemotherapy. After Michelle passed away, her mother, Ann Marie Morse, decided that no other student should face the same challenge, and has been working to pass a law that will not let this happen to any other family.

Michelle's law will ensure that college students with cancer can focus on getting better and not worry about how they are going to be covered for cancer treatments that they need. Thank you sponsoring H.R. 2851. We appreciate your dedication in the fight against cancer.

Sincerely,

Paula D. Pearlman, Esq.
Executive Director

DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGAL CENTER

July 23, 2008

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