

April ____, 2006

The Honorable (Member's name)
(U.S. House of Representatives / U.S. Senate)
Washington, D.C. (20515 / 20510)

Dear Representative/Senator (Member's name) :

I am writing you in my capacity as (your position – ex.: PMR Department Chair) at (your facility – ex.: University of Florida) . I request your support for a legislative proposal developed by a coalition of rehabilitation researchers, medical professional societies, and disability organizations to elevate the National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research (NCMRR) to independent status within the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

NCMRR was created by Congress in 1990 and placed within the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) during its formative stages. The mission of the center is to plan, coordinate and collaborate on cross-cutting, multidisciplinary rehabilitation research across the NIH's institutes and centers for the benefit of people with disabilities. Although NCMRR supports exciting and promising rehabilitation research, this activity has been difficult considering the maternal and child health focus of the institute in which the center is housed.

In 1997, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommended that the NCMRR be elevated to independent status within NIH in its report on rehabilitation science entitled "Enabling America," a report requested by then Majority Leader Robert Dole of Kansas. This report noted that an independent agency within NIH would be able to better achieve the NCMRR's mission.

NCMRR currently has a budget of about \$75 million and approximately \$225 million in rehabilitation research is performed by other NIH agencies. After developing its infrastructure over the past several years, the center is now ready to mature into either an institute or an independent center in order to capitalize on this initial investment in rehabilitation research. An independent agency at NIH would provide greater awareness of rehabilitation science within the NIH research community. It would also permit a strengthened leadership to better leverage and coordinate the federal investment in rehabilitation research, all for the purpose of improving the functional status of people with disabilities.

There are currently at least 30 million Americans with some form of physical or cognitive disability which severely limits their activities of daily living who may benefit from this proposal. As our nation's population ages and with improvements in medical care and technology, this proposal could have a profound impact on people with disabling impairments such as stroke, brain injury, spinal cord injury and paralysis, arthritis and major joint replacements, back pain, amputations and other neurological and musculoskeletal conditions.

Your position in Congress is very important in the consideration of any legislation affecting rehabilitation science at the NIH. I have attached background materials on this proposal. Please let me know if we can count on your support or if I can address any outstanding concerns you

may have with this specific NCMRR proposal. Thank you for your interest in NIH issues and for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

Attachment