

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 11, 2000

The Honorable Nancy-Ann Min DeParle
Administrator
Health Care Financing Administration
U.S. Department Of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Administrator:

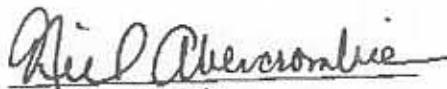
We are writing to add our support to the request that Medicare provide coverage for augmentative and alternative communication devices (AAC). AAC devices provide individuals with severe expressive communication disabilities the ability to communicate. Due to cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, stroke, ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease, these individuals are unable to speak, use sign language, or write. AAC devices allow them to lead more productive, safer and self-reliant lives.

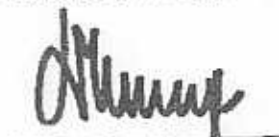
We understand that AAC devices are already covered by every state Medicaid program, CHAMPUS (Tri-Care), the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and hundreds of commercial health insurance providers. We are hopeful that the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) will soon follow suit.

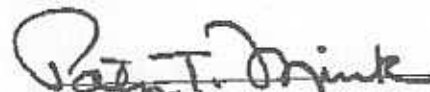
We are aware that a formal request for Medicare coverage for AAC devices was submitted by the nation's thirteen leading disability organizations on December 30, 1999. We urge you to promptly and affirmatively complete your review of the request.

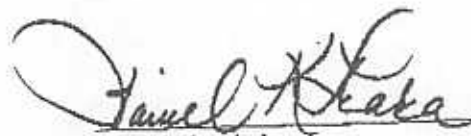
Thank you for your early response.

Sincerely,


Neil Abercrombie
Member of Congress


Daniel K. Inoué
United States Senator


Patsy T. Mink
Member of Congress


Daniel K. Akaka
United States Senator