SANDRA SWIFT PARRINO

September 9, 1981

The Honorable
Robert T. Stafford
Room 5219
Dirkson Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 21510

Subject: Confirmation hearings of C. Everett Koop, M.D. as Surgeon General (designate)

Dear Senator Stafford,

I am the mother of three sons, one of whom has a physical disability. Considered a quadriplegic, he is in a wheelchair. My husband, a physician, and I have explored everything presently known and available to ensure that our son, a mentally alert young person, has the right to national education, health services and community services. It has been an indescribable struggle!

It has been my task to alert public officials to an awareness of the needs of disabled persons. (My personal experience has led me to being the Director of the Office of the Disabled, Briarcliff/Ossining, New York and a member of the Board of Directors of Rehabilitation International USA). What a relief it is to have Dr. C. Everett Koop tell me about the stress a parent endures with a disabled child, rather than my telling him.

Upon meeting Dr. Koop, I did not have to beg nor plead my case. He totally understood. What was even more incredible, he seemed to understand why the public and the medical profession in particular are unable to emotionally handle disability. He explained that a physician's training was not conducive to allow him to share in stressfull situations within a family. He further explained how, with assistance parents could help each other through inter-family therapy. This I consider a revolutionary statement, but certainly accurate.

Although I am not in accord with Dr. Koop's positions on abortion and genetic counseling, I am relieved and actually excited that after fourteen years of fighting for my son, at last someone of esteem seems to understand my position as a mother of a disabled teenager and a community leader.

Dr. Koop also gave me examples of some of the things we could do within the available funds to help the disabled and their families. He believes it is possible for an area computer to provide information to a family on such things as disability, the nearest diagnostic facility, the nearest treatment center, parent support groups as well as community agencies, both private and public, that can assist the family.

If only my family had had access to such information fourteen years ago, many hours of frustration and a great deal of money could have been saved.

I would like to add my support for Dr. C. Everett Koop to be Surgeon General of the United States. If you can understand the frustration of trying to make public officials aware of the disabled's problems, you will understand how exciting it would be to have a person like Dr. Koop in the position of Surgeon General. A person who is already educated in the needs of the disabled and recognizes what can be done to help them.

In recognition of the International Year of Disabled Persons, I believe the disabled and the elderly would be greatly served by having Dr. Koop continue their battle for social integration after the International Year is officially over.

Sincerely yours,

Sandra Swift Parrino

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