

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF DIRECTOR

ACTION REFERRAL

TO <i>Jacobs</i>	DATE <i>September 22, 2009</i>
---------------------	-----------------------------------

DIRECTOR'S USE ONLY	ACTION REQUESTED
1. LOG NUMBER <i>100041</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare reply for the Director's signature DATE DUE _____
2. DATE SIGNED BY DIRECTOR <i>Cleaved 9/29/09, letter attached.</i> <i>copy: Shaker</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prepare reply for appropriate signature DATE DUE <i>10-1-09</i> <input type="checkbox"/> FOIA DATE DUE _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Necessary Action

APPROVALS (Only when prepared for director's signature)	APPROVE	* DISAPPROVE (Note reason for disapproval and return to preparer.)	COMMENT
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

255-8235

1510 Sterling Oaks Drive
Post Office Box 1587
Moncks Corner, SC 29461
United States of America

September 17, 2009

Senator Paul G. Campbell
South Carolina State Senate
604 Gressette Bldg.
Columbia, SC 29201
United States of America

Dear Senator Paul G. Campbell,

Subject Disability and Medical Assistance

I am writing hopefully for some help or some direction for how I may be able to get some help with health issues.

Some background:

In February of 1990, I was diagnosed with Hodgkins Lymphoma, stage 2B. I was treated with Chemotherapy and Radiation and was cured. I was insured at the time, had a salaried job and a new family. During the treatment, I had a serious bout with asthma that I had previously outgrown in childhood, and it continues today. The main tumor was located in the center of my chest and was resting on my heart and displacing my lungs. The radiation therapy irradiated over this area which also included parts of my heart, lungs and diaphragm.

I had moved on in life, started my own business, was exercising regularly and felt I was in great shape and, I had no continuing ill effects from my battle with cancer other than occasional asthma.

I am, and have been, a very small business owner, since 1994. I am in the legal research business. I provide title abstracts, land research and other Real Estate services for Real Estate Attorneys and Closing Companies, etc. In the years around the year 2000 I was doing very well in life and with my business. Sometime around 2002, I believe, the Real Estate business started a very serious decline. I had to lay off all of my help. I had to drop my health insurance, among other things. I am currently the only person in my business, although, I do use family and friend to do some of the work I am unable to do, to survive. I continued to hold on to my business, this is all I have known since College. I kept thinking business would come back but it has only continued to get worse. Now, I have lost everything I have worked for over the years.

Back to the reason for writing: I was (I thought) in very good shape. I was trying to stay in good health until my business rebounded and I could afford insurance again. I was working out 5 days a week and riding a bike 5 miles every other day. Regardless, in September of 2006, I became very ill and landed in the Hospital and on a ventilator for four days with massive double-pneumonia. After waking, my heart went into spontaneous V-Tacs or PVCs (premature ventricular contractions) which subsequently sent me to the cardiac unit for over a week.

My asthma had been getting worse and more frequent over the years since my cancer treatment and I had been getting pneumonias and bronchitis all of my life. But, this was most unexpected. After 17 days in the hospital I was released. It took months to recover but at 5 months out I started back in the gym. One month after that, in May of 2007, I ended up back in the hospital, again with another massive double-pneumonia. Fortunately, it was not as bad this time. I spent only 12 days in the hospital but I found out what was causing my illnesses. My potassium and creatinine levels were extremely high,

● Page 2

September 17, 2009

causing damage to my kidneys. My body could not flush the impurities from my system and I discovered that I have a myriad of compounding illnesses and diseases that work together to make my situation much worse than if it was only one or two conditions by themselves. My medical conditions include Chronic Asthma, Severe Sleep Apnea, Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension, Hypertension, Severe Hiatal Hernia, GURD, Irregular Heartbeat (Premature Ventricular Contractions) & Restless Leg Syndrome.

In summary, my Severe Hiatal Hernia (literally, more than half of stomach has pierced my diaphragm and is above the diaphragm, displacing my lungs and resting on my heart) and resulting GURD, is causing aspiration into my lungs resulting in aggravated and extremely difficult to control Asthma and Bronchitis and, difficulty and discomfort eating. Reflux is damaging my teeth, causing breakages, frequent and sometimes severe Pneumonias, and difficulty breathing. I have Extended Severe Sleep Apnea and it has resulted in Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension causing compounded and extreme difficulty breathing and functioning in a normal physical capacity. My Oxygen Saturation levels plummet to between 86 and 89 when walking leisurely, showering, getting out of a car, etc. I can not throw ball with the kids or ride a bike for any distance. I come very short of passing out when getting out of the car and walking into the house, etc., particular difficulties if carrying groceries, etc. There are real concerns for throat and esophageal cancer due to lengthy erosion, severe pneumonias resulting in complications and death, and overexertion resulting in sudden death due to my Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension. All of these conditions work together to compound one another.

I went without health insurance for several years because I was dropped from my former employer's group plan by the insurance company due to too many large claims by the group. I was then ineligible for normal health due to pre-existing conditions. (Cancer within the last 10 years) I was in the State's high risk insurance pool through Blue Cross for a while but I was unable to afford it.

My doctors, rightfully so, are classifying me as Disabled. My Pulmonologist had me sign a form for the Highway Department to get a Handicap placard for the car. He is willing to help me in any way he can to get some kind of assistance and hopefully, eventually, surgery to correct, at the very least, my Hiatal Hernia.

The crux of the problem is that I am unable to get assistance or even someone who can send me in the right direction. No one is willing to help. My doctors can not tell me where to go for help. Social Security says I am ineligible for Disability. For a few of the last several years, my income was not high enough to require filing of income tax, and I did not file. I did not understand the implications or the consequences of this, particularly not knowing that I was going to get sick. Unfortunately, my experiences have lead me to believe I would be denied Disability, regardless. They have also denied me SSI, three times. Apparently, they do not even look at someone with physical disabilities unless they are over the age of 55. I have hired an attorney for the third appeal but it has been two and a half years. I can not really work or get another job. I can not get, let alone afford, health insurance. I have been turned down by everyone but the hospital and a few doctors who were willing to write off some of my medical bills due to medical indigence. I am unable to pay my bills, afford food or living expenses, I can not afford anything. If it was not for family and friends I would be dead from neglect, illness and the inability to take care of myself. I can not continue to live off my family and friends' generosity forever. They can not afford it in this economy. I can work in an office and I can go to school but I have no idea what I might be qualified for or how or where to go to find out. I doubt anyone is going to hire me with these medical issues, being sick all the time, and the job market being what is today.

I found some sites online that offer help to those that can not afford their premiums or medications but only if the patient has insurance! I have been shot down by literally everyone I have contacted for assistance.

I should have 40 more good years left and I feel like my life is over. I am not looking for a free ride. I am happy to do anything I am capable of to repay.

● Page 3

September 17, 2009

I have paid into "the system" since I was 14 years old, well more than half my life. I have paid taxes, contributed to society in a constructive and helpful way, raised two families and I can not get help now that I need it. There are so many people that do not really need help that are getting handouts right and left. My uncle is a Pediatrician and he was flooded that I could not get assistance of some kind because he sees the issues that others come into his office for, far less serious than mine or my girlfriend's.

My girlfriend, who has been a Godsend to me during this, is in basically the same situation. She has insurance that her ex-husband is required to carry for her but it is going to run out in less than two years. She is also medically disabled. She has advanced heart disease and advanced type 2 diabetes. She had triple by-pass surgery when she was 35 years old. Several of her arteries are still almost completely blocked but the surgeons could not fix those. She takes, literally, 30 different medications a day. Her health is deteriorating fast. Her feet are split all the time, no feelings in her feet, pain in her legs, diabetes abscesses appear on her head on regular basis, she is rapidly losing her sight due to diabetic retinopathy, it is already quite severe. She has been turned down for disability despite her severe illnesses and her doctors saying she is unable to work in her condition. She can not get anyone to work on her when she is sick because of the severity of her illnesses. Doctors/Dentists, etc., are scared of the liability and will not help her.

She has been living off her father's inheritance and she is starting to lose everything she is just trying to pay bills and eat and feed her children. She lost more than half of her inheritance in the recent stock market crash and there is now not enough for her and her children to live on. She is going to lose everything and still no one is going to help. She too has paid her taxes and been an upstanding and contributory citizen since she was 14 and she is left high and dry to wait and die.

What I am asking for is some help or where I can go for some help. I am at a complete loss and I am desperate and scared.

Respectfully yours,



Rhett H. Weathers
Title Abstrator

RHW



Log 0141



September 29, 2009

Mr. Rhett H. Weathers
Post Office Box 1567
Moncks Corner, South Carolina 29461

Dear Mr. Weathers:

Senator Paul G. Campbell contacted our agency on your behalf regarding your healthcare needs.

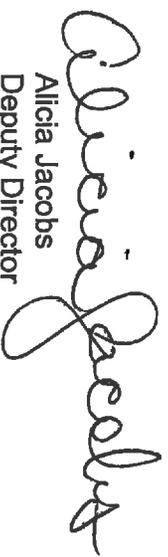
Medicaid uses the same criteria as the Social Security Administration (SSA) to determine eligibility for it's Aged, Blind or Disabled program. Therefore if you were to apply for Medicaid as a disabled adult, your application based on disability would be denied. Your letter mentions that you are now appealing SSA's decision. If you have any questions regarding your appeal, you should contact the Charleston SSA Office of Adjudication and Review at (843) 727-4511.

Another healthcare option is the Medically Indigent Assistance Program (MIAP). This program sponsors inpatient hospital coverage for individuals who lack financial resources to pay for their care and whose income is below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Please call Ms. Heather Graham at (843) 719-4012, to find out more about the MIAP in Berkeley County.

We have enclosed information on other programs and organizations that can assist residents in South Carolina with their healthcare needs, prescriptions, and daily living needs.

If you have any questions about the Medicaid program, please contact Ms. Jenny Lynch at (803) 898-3965 and she will be happy to assist you. We hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,


Alicia Jacobs
Deputy Director

AJ/cj
Enclosures