

Seniors Groups Call for Immediate Repeal of 15% Home Health Cut

October 8, 2001

Dear Senator/Representative:

On behalf of the undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO), we are writing to enlist your support for passage of legislation this year to eliminate the 15% cut in Medicare home health funding scheduled for October 1, 2002. The Congressional Budget Resolution established a reserve fund to accomplish this. It is urgent that Congress now act to make this a reality.

While we recognize the urgent need to focus attention on responding to the September 11 tragedy, we do a great disservice if we permit the disaster to terminate our efforts on other important priorities. We urge members of Congress to proceed with its plans, laid out in the Budget Resolution, to repeal this 15% cut in home health funding.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projects that the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (BBA) will reduce Medicare home health spending by \$71 billion over five years (FY98-02), more than four times the \$16 billion savings target set by Congress. In just two years (FY97-99), home health funding was cut by 48% and the total number of beneficiaries receiving home health care dropped nearly 900,000. This reduction in the number of individuals receiving home health services is contrary to the New Freedom Initiative supported by the Bush Administration and the Congress.

Medicare home health users tend to be older, lower income and more chronically ill than the average Medicare beneficiary. Additional cuts will result in the oldest, most vulnerable beneficiaries being denied the care needed for them to remain in their own homes.

Lengthening life spans as a result of better public health care and more effective medical treatments will demand more home care, not less. Also, hospitals are releasing patients sooner and sicker patients are increasingly seeking alternatives to hospitalizations. We must do everything possible to ensure that Americans are able to receive care in their homes and communities surrounded by their families and friends.

We appreciate the commitment to home health patients demonstrated in passing a budget resolution that specifically provided funding for eliminating the scheduled 15% cut. We look forward to working with you to ensure passage of legislation to eliminate this potentially devastating cut in home health care for our nation's seniors.

Alzheimer's Association

American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging

American Association of International Aging

American Federation of Teachers, Program on Retirement and Retirees

American Public Health Association

Association for Gerontology and Human Development in Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Association of Jewish Aging Services

Catholic Health Association of the United States

Eldercare America

Green Thumb, Inc

Meals on Wheels Association of America

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys

National Association for Home Care

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs

National Association of Professional Geriatrics Care Managers

National Association of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Director's, Inc.

National Association of Senior Companion Project Directors

National Association of State Long Term Care Ombudsman Program
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council on Aging
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Senior Citizens Law Center
United Auto Workers Retired Workers Department
United Jewish Communities