

July 1, 2010

Draft Competitive Bidding Sign-on Letter

We, the undersigned organizations, strongly support Representative Kendrick Meek's legislation, HR 3790, which would end the Medicare competitive bidding program for durable medical equipment (DME) in a budget-neutral manner. We urge Congress to pass this important legislation immediately. Our national, state and local organizations believe that this program is fundamentally flawed and will create significant obstacles to patient care while threatening the homecare infrastructure for our nation's seniors and disabled.

As our nation's medical system contends with the daunting challenge of providing coverage to an additional 30 million Americans while Medicare prepares for more than 70 million baby boomers to become Medicare eligible, now is not the time to prohibit 90 percent of homecare providers from serving Medicare beneficiaries. Such a move will harm patients by reducing access to homecare services and compromising the quality of care these beneficiaries receive.

According to physicians, clinicians and hospital case managers, the bidding program will disrupt the continuum of care by restricting patients from going to their providers of choice in order to receive the appropriate items and services that they require.

The HME sector is dedicated to working with Congress to ensure H.R. 3790 will replace the troubled bidding program with a series of payment reductions for homecare providers, ensuring that CBO-projected savings are met.

This legislation has strong bipartisan support in the House of Representatives. The elimination of the bidding program will prevent the needless closing of DME facilities, prevent the layoff of employees and ensure high-quality service and equipment that Medicare beneficiaries have become accustomed to receiving. Moreover, homecare providers will be able to maintain their critical role in reducing the nation's health care costs by allowing beneficiaries to stay in their homes with the products and services on which they depend.

Once again, we strongly urge you to take immediate action to stop the flawed competitive bidding program and pass legislation, which would terminate the program in a manner that achieves the *same* projected savings for Medicare.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. We look forward to working with you to protect Medicare beneficiaries' access to the home medical equipment and services that they need.

Respectfully,

American Association for Homecare