



March 28, 2011

The Honorable Glenn Thompson
124 Cannon House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jason Altmire
332 Cannon House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representatives Thompson and Altmire:

We, the undersigned organizations, would like to thank you for introducing bipartisan legislation, HR 1041, the Fairness in Medicare Bidding Act, legislation that will end the Medicare “competitive” bidding program for home medical equipment and services (HME). We support this important legislation because it will protect patients’ access to medically required home medical equipment and services. Having the right HME equipment and responsive service is a critical factor in helping patients and their families maintain good health and independence in their communities.

The competitive bidding program is a fundamentally flawed pricing mechanism that will create significant obstacles to quality patient care and needed services while threatening the homecare infrastructure for our nation’s seniors and persons with disabilities. Competitive bidding restricts access to, and choice of, HME items and services by forcing consumers to use certain home medical equipment providers whether they furnish the products and services that provide the most benefit to patients or not. In addition, rather than lowering costs, competitive bidding is increasing them. With fewer providers allowed to provide products and services, normal expedient deliveries of items and services are being eliminated and therefore Medicare costs are increasing because patients are being hospitalized for longer periods and may require more frequent physician visits.

Unfortunately, patients are already experiencing access problems in Round One areas. Since the January 1, 2011, implementation of this program, hundreds of patients and providers have reported problems and complaints about getting medically required home medical equipment and services to seniors and persons with disabilities. We expect the complaints to increase exponentially as the program progresses and far more once the program expands across the

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nation. The program affects Medicare beneficiaries who require oxygen therapy, enteral nutrients (tube feeding), continuous positive air pressure (CPAP) and respiratory assistive devices, power wheelchairs, walkers, hospital beds and support surfaces, and mail-order diabetic supplies.

Consumers, physicians, clinicians and hospital case managers all agree that 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 elimination of the bidding program will prevent the needless closing of home medical equipment providers, prevent the layoff of employees and ensure high-quality service and equipment that Medicare beneficiaries have become accustomed to receiving. Moreover, home medical equipment 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.

Thank you again for introducing legislation, HR 1041, that will end the Medicare "competitive" bidding program for HME because it is harming the most vulnerable among us. We look forward to working with you and your staff on the passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Tyler J. Wilson
President

Undersigned Organizations

1. The ALS Association
2. AlphaOne (Maine Center for Independent Living)
3. American Association of People with Disabilities
4. American Foundation for the Blind
5. American Sleep Apnea Association
6. American Therapeutic Recreation Association
7. Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs
8. Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living
9. Association of University Centers on Disabilities
10. Brain Injury Association of America
11. Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation
12. International Ventilator Users Network

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13. Long Island Center for Independent Living
14. Muscular Dystrophy Association
15. National Association of the Deaf
16. National Council on Independent Living
17. National Emphysema/COPD Association
18. National Family Caregivers Association
19. National Spinal Cord Injury Association
20. Post-Polio Health International
21. Statewide Independent Living Council of Georgia
22. Three Rivers Center for Independent Living
23. UCP/CLASS (formerly UCP Pittsburgh)
24. United Spinal Association