

July 16, 2010

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Dear Senator:

Please delay implementation of the provision that eliminates a Medicare beneficiary's option to purchase their standard power wheelchair in the first month.

As a power wheelchair user I know that wheelchairs are as individual as the person who uses it and are not one size fits all!

Currently the Medicare program allows individuals a choice as to whether they want to purchase the power wheelchair that is the right for their size, disability, functional level and home situation or if they want to rent it. As you know, over 90% of beneficiaries choose to purchase the power wheelchair because they have chronic, long-term, conditions and require the wheelchair to remain active and independent in their homes and communities.

While we continue to have concerns with the policy change that will require a mandatory 13 month rental, it appears that the impact on consumers in need of these mobility devices will be much less severe if an additional year is provided for the industry and CMS to adapt to this significant change. Absent a delay we are concerned the outcome of implementing this policy on January 1, 2011 will create significant access and quality of care issues as providers of this equipment struggle to adapt to a business model that has the costs front loaded but the payments from Medicare spread over 13 months.

- **If individuals are required to rent power wheelchairs, instead of having the option to purchase them, many DME providers have indicated that they will not be able to continue to provide power wheelchairs effective January 1, 2011 because they do not have the access to capital (lines of credit) necessary to cover the up-front cost of acquiring the power wheelchair and wait 13-months to receive full payment. This will create a major access issue for people with significant mobility limitations, especially in rural and underserved areas.**
- Providers who continue to make standard power wheelchairs available will supply the "type" of power wheelchair an individual qualifies for from their inventory of available rental items; they **will not be able to afford to order a chair** to meet the beneficiary's unique specifications as they do today.
- Consumers may receive a new power wheelchair or **a used power wheelchair** during the rental period. This will depend on the provider's inventory at the time the physician prescribes a power wheelchair. Providing a one year delay will allow time for providers to build their rental fleet to accommodate more diverse sizes and types of power wheelchairs.

Please delay implementation of section 3136 of the Affordable Care Act for one year to allow for a smoother transition to this significant policy change in a manner that will limit the negative impact on consumers access to medically necessary power wheelchairs.

Sincerely,



Kelly Buckland
Executive Director