



March 16, 2015

The Honorable Susan Collins
United State Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Collins and Senator Schumer,

We are writing on behalf of the American Academy of Home Care Medicine (Academy) to thank you for introducing the bipartisan Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2015. We support your efforts to obtain passage of this important legislation in the 114th Congress.

The Academy represents physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants who provide house calls to some of Medicare's sickest and most costly beneficiaries—those with multiple chronic conditions who are home-limited due to illness and disability. These beneficiaries, in addition to their home limiting medical condition, are also often physically isolated and located in medically underserved areas.

The bill, as you know, authorizes nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and other eligible health care professionals to certify patient eligibility for home health care services under Medicare. This would improve access to needed home health care services, while at the same time avoiding hospital, sub-acute care facility and nursing home admissions—all of which are costly to the beneficiary, to taxpayers and to Medicare. In addition to avoiding unnecessary cost, home health care will also reduce the burden and trauma of admission, and the risks associated with inpatient stays.

Expert study assessed the impact of the bill last year and projected Medicare savings of \$7.1 million in 2015 and up to a ten-year savings of \$252.6 million (Dobson, DaVanzo & Associates, LLC, "Updated Report: Impact of The Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act (H.R. 2504; S. 1332) on Medicare Expenditures," March 25, 2014). This analysis also noted the potential to reduce beneficiary admissions and to reduce lengths of stay for those in institutional settings.

Although current law recognizes nurse practitioners and physician assistants as authorized Medicare providers and allows them to certify eligibility for nursing home care, it precludes them from certifying eligibility for home health care services. This is an unnecessary barrier to care. Moreover, nurse practitioners and physician assistants are often the only providers available in urban and rural professional shortage areas. The need for qualified medical professionals to certify medical necessary home health services will only grow given the projected primary care shortage and the increase in Medicare beneficiaries.

We appreciate your continued leadership and thank you for your support of this legislation that improves access to medical professionals who are qualified to provide services that improves care, avoids cost and enables beneficiaries to remain in their homes. Please contact Constance Row or Gary Swartz at aahcm@aahcm.org or 410-676-7966 with any questions.

Sincerely,

Thomas Cornwell, MD
President, American Academy of Home Care Medicine