

June 10, 2003

Dear Representative:

We write to urge you in the strongest possible terms to support a “level playing field” between Medicare fee-for-service and private plans in any Medicare reform legislation you may consider. We strongly oppose any ‘carrot or stick’ approaches to move beneficiaries from one type of delivery model to another. Beneficiaries should be free to choose the doctor, hospital and other providers they prefer and should not be encouraged or forced to disrupt established provider relationships.

To achieve such a level playing field we believe that any Medicare prescription drug legislation should provide the same prescription drug coverage and other program enhancements for all Medicare beneficiaries, regardless of whether they are in traditional Medicare fee-for-service, Medicare+Choice, or other form of private plan.

Also, government subsidies to traditional Medicare for the purpose of providing prescription drug and other coverage above existing benefits should be equal to the government subsidies given to private plans to provide those benefits. Only equal funding for additional benefits will assure that beneficiaries in traditional Medicare will not be forced to pay higher premiums to get those benefits than those able and willing to join private plans

Further, legislation should not lead to increased premiums for Medicare’s current benefits package for those who stay in traditional Medicare fee-for-service program or for individuals who do not select drug coverage. Premium increases in the traditional program could make the program unaffordable for seniors and individuals with disabilities, forcing them to join private plans that limit their choice of provider

Please protect the viability of the traditional Medicare program. We look forward to working with you to enact program improvements that will not threaten patient-doctor relationships.

Sincerely,

American Federation of Teachers
American Friends Service Committee
American Medical Student Association

AIDS Action
American Public Health Association
Brain Injury Association of America
Center for Aging Policy
Center on Disability and Health
Church Women United
Consumers Union
Families USA
Gray Panthers
HIV Medicine Association
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Medicare Rights Center
National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems
National Association of Retired Federal Employees
National Association of Social Workers
National Coalition of Mental Health Professionals and Consumers
National Community Pharmacists Association
National Council of Jewish Women
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Mental Health Association
National Priorities Project
National Women's Health Network
NETWORK: The National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office
Public Citizen
Service Employees International Union
The Arc of the United States
United Cerebral Palsy
USAction
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries