

End the Two-Year Wait for Medicare

March 26, 2009

Honorable Senator Jeff Bingaman
703 Hart Senate Building
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Gene Green
2372 Rayburn House Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Bingaman and Congressman Green,

The Coalition to End the Two-Year Wait for Medicare enthusiastically supports S.700 and H.R.1708, your legislation to eliminate the unjustifiable delay in coverage for a group of Americans most in need of access to health care — the estimated 1.8 million people with severe disabilities who are waiting to become eligible for Medicare coverage. The Coalition represents over 120 organizations of patient advocates and health care providers who have joined together to urge Congress to make coverage for people with disabilities a priority as it begins the process of addressing national health care reform.

With health care reform on the horizon, there is a unique opportunity to close this unjustifiable gap in health care coverage for people with disabilities. Nearly 40 percent of people with disabilities are without health insurance coverage at some point during their wait for Medicare; 24 percent have no health insurance during this entire period. We support your legislation which will phase-out the waiting period for all people with disabilities over ten years, while immediately eliminating the waiting period for people with life-threatening conditions.

The waiting period forces people with severe disabilities to endure two years, during which treatment and care of their condition are put at risk. Many forgo medical treatment and/or stop taking medications, compromising their already fragile health and resulting ultimately in conditions that are often more costly to treat when Medicare coverage finally begins.

No one with a disability severe enough to qualify for SSDI should be without health coverage. We look forward to working with you to ensure passage of this important legislation.

(See below for a list of Coalition members)

End the Two-Year Wait for Medicare

ACCSES

Advocacy for Patients with Chronic Illness, Inc.

AIDS Action Baltimore, Inc.

AIDS Charitable Trust of New Mexico

AIDS Treatment Data Network

AIDS Treatment News

Alpha-1 Association

Alpha-1 Foundation

Alzheimer's Association

American Academy of Neurology

American Association for International Aging

American Autoimmune Related Diseases
Association

American Cancer Society Cancer Action
Network (ACS CAN)

American Council of the Blind (ACB)

American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)

American Medical Rehabilitation Providers
Association (AMRPA)

American Network of Community Options and
Resources (ANCOR)

American Psychological Association

Amputee Coalition of America

Amyloidosis Support Groups

Arthritis Foundation

Association for Ambulatory Behavioral
Healthcare

Association for Frontotemporal Dementias

Association of Assistive Technology Act
Programs (ATAP)

Association of Community Cancer Centers

Association of Programs for Rural Independent
Living (APRIL)

Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Barrier Free Living, Inc.

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Benign Essential Blepharospasm Research
Foundation (BEBRF)

Breast Cancer Network of Strength

Brooklyn Center for Independence of the
Disabled

Catskill Center for Independence

Center for Disability Rights, Inc.

Center for Independence of the Disabled in
New York

Center for Medicare Advocacy

Children's Tumor Foundation

Coalition for Pulmonary Fibrosis

Coalition of Behavioral Health Agencies, Inc.

Commission on the Public's Health System
(CPHS)

Community AIDS National Network (TIICANN)

Community Health Charities of America

COPD Foundation

Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

Easter Seals

Ehlers Danlos National Foundation

Epilepsy Foundation

Families USA

Friends of Jazz

Geriatric Mental Health Alliance of New York

Harlem Independent Living Center

Hispanic Senior Action Council

HIV Medicine Association

HIV/AIDS Services for African Americans in
Alaska

HIVictorious, Inc.

Incontinentia Pigmenti International Foundation

Independence Care System

International Foundation for Alternative
Research in AIDS (IFARA)

International Pemphigus and Pemphigoid
Foundation

Institute for the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Elderly,
Inc.

Kennedy's Disease Association

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

Lupus Foundation of America

Medicare Rights Center

Men's Health Network

Mental Health America

Michigan Positive Action Coalition (MI-POZ)

Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with
Disabilities

Myasthenia Gravis Foundation of America
(MGFA)

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
(NAELA)

National Adult Protective Services Association

National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS
Directors (NASTAD)

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and
Associated Disorders (ANAD)

National Association of People with AIDS

National Association of State Directors of
Developmental Disabilities Services
(NASDDDS)

National Association of State Directors of
Special Education (NASDSE)

National Committee to Preserve Social Security
and Medicare (NCPSSM)
National Council for Community Behavioral
Healthcare
National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Family Caregivers Association
National Foundation for Dentistry for the
Handicapped
National Gray Panthers
National Health Council
National Marfan Foundation
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization of Rare Disorders
(NORD)
National Organization of Social Security
Claimants' Representatives (NOSSCR)
National Patient Advocate Foundation
New Mexico AIDS Services
New York Citizens' Committee on Aging
NISH
North American Brain Tumor Coalition (NABTC)
NTM Info & Research
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Parent to Parent of NY State
Parents United Together of Mississippi
Pulmonary Hypertension Association
Options for Independence, Inc.
Regional Center for Independent Living
The Resource Center for Accessible Living, Inc.
Rose F. Kennedy University Center for
Excellence in Developmental
Disabilities, Albert Einstein College of
Medicine
Scleroderma Foundation
Shwachman Diamond Syndrome Foundation
Southern Tier Independence Center
Special Needs Alliance
Spina Bifida Association
Syncope Trust and Reflex Anoxic Seizures
(STARS)
The AIDS Institute
The Arc of the United States
United Cerebral Palsy
United Jewish Communities
United Spinal Association
Village Care of New York
Westchester Independent Living Center
Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement