



May 25, 2017

SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY

Re: Request to Sign-On to Congressional Letter to CMS on Patient Access to Durable Medical Equipment and Related Services

Dear Member of Congress:

The undersigned members of the Independence Through Enhancement of Medicare and Medicaid (ITEM) Coalition strongly urge you to sign-on to and support the attached Congressional letter urging the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to use its administrative authority to make important, needed reforms to current durable medical equipment (DME) policies and regulations. The attached bipartisan letter was recently distributed by Reps. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), Dave Loebsack (D-IA), Lee Zeldin (R-NY), and Diana DeGette (D-CO). The letter highlights several areas within current DME policy that negatively affect Medicare beneficiary access to care, and provides suggestions for how the Secretary can and should act to make improvements that Medicare beneficiaries desperately need.

Over the past several years, CMS has made significant policy and regulatory changes to the Medicare DME benefit. Many of these changes have been intended to save taxpayer money; however, they have had a substantial negative impact on beneficiary access to vital devices and services that improve health and function. As the Congressional sign-on letter details, CMS's decisions involving the competitive bidding program, non-competitive bid areas (CBAs), complex rehabilitation technology (CRT) accessories, and oxygen concentrators have resulted in deep cuts that ultimately harm beneficiary access to care.

The Administration has the authority to rectify the procedural and substantive issues in DME policy in each of these areas, and the letter calls for CMS to take action to provide needed relief for providers and suppliers of DME and the beneficiaries who depend on these services and devices.

The ITEM Coalition has commented on many of these issues in the past, and supports and applauds the bipartisan Congressional letter on these issues to CMS. The undersigned organizations hope you will join your colleagues in supporting these needed changes to improve Medicare beneficiary access to care.

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The ITEM Coalition is a national consumer and clinician-led coalition advocating for access to and coverage of assistive devices, technologies, and related services for persons with injuries, illnesses, disabilities, and chronic conditions of all ages. Our members represent individuals with a wide range of disabling conditions, as well as the providers who serve them, including such conditions as multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injuries, brain injuries, stroke, paralysis, limb loss, cerebral palsy, hearing and speech impairments, visual impairments, vision loss, spina bifida, myositis, and other life-altering conditions.

To contact the ITEM Coalition, please contact the ITEM Coalition coordinators, Peter Thomas, at Peter.Thomas@PowersLaw.com or Leif Brierley at Leif.Brierley@PowersLaw.com, or by calling 202-466-6550.

Sincerely,

ITEM Coalition Signatories

Academy of Spinal Cord Injury Professionals
ACCSES
American Association on Health and Disability
American Cochlear Implant Alliance
American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine
American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Therapeutic Recreation Association
Amputee Coalition
Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER)
Brain Injury Association of America
Clinician Task Force
Institute for Matching Person & Technology, Inc.
Lakeshore Foundation
National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Rights Network
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Spina Bifida Association
The Myositis Association
The Simon Foundation for Continence
Unite 2 Fight Paralysis
United Cerebral Palsy
United Spinal Association