

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Ensure Medicare Access to Compassionate End-of-Life Care
Cosponsor the Medicare Hospice Protection Act

September 12, 2008

Dear Colleague:

Millions of Americans rely on hospices to provide themselves or their loved ones with compassionate end-of-life care that enhances their quality of life. The services that hospices offer address the physical, spiritual, emotional and practical needs of the terminally ill.

Unfortunately, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently issued a final rule, which goes into effect on October 1, 2008, that would cut Medicare reimbursement rates for hospices. These cuts would affect the care hospices provide to the terminally ill by phasing out the budget neutrality factor in the hospice wage index.

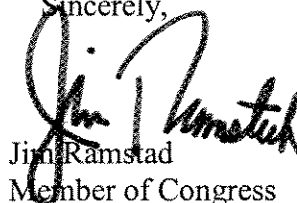
To ensure that Medicare beneficiaries do not lose access to hospice services, we have introduced the Medicare Hospice Protection Act. This bill would prohibit CMS from implementing this shortsighted and misguided rule.

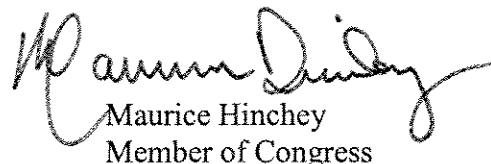
As our nation faces the continuing challenges of meeting the health care needs of an aging population, now is not the time to cut back on Medicare reimbursement for hospice services, which are cost effective and save Medicare money. A Duke University study showed that patients receiving hospice care cost the Medicare program about \$2,300 less than those who did not.

Please join us in preserving Medicare beneficiaries' access to hospice services so that they can have dignity at the end of life. To become a cosponsor, please contact Ray Thorn with Rep. Van Hollen at x5-5341 or Ray.Thorn@mail.house.gov, or Karin Hope with Rep. Ramstad at x5-2871 or Karin.Hope@mail.house.gov, or Erika Conway with Rep. Hinchey at x5-6335 or Erika.Conway@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,


Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress


Jim Ramstad
Member of Congress


Maurice Hinchey
Member of Congress