



December 19, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Christopher Dodd
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Senator Baucus, Senator Dodd and Senator Harkin:

On behalf of hospice and palliative care providers and the more than 1.5 million patients, and their families, served by hospice each year, the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) would like to express our strong support for the national effort to enact health care reform. We acknowledge the enormity and complexity of the task facing Congress, and we applaud your recognition of the importance of preserving quality, compassionate and cost efficient end-of-life care as a critical component to the nation's health infrastructure.

NHPCO sincerely appreciates that the Senate leadership has responded to the concerns of the hospice community regarding proposed reductions to the annual market basket increase through the Manager's amendment to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. We applaud this modification to the legislation and support the bill's progress with the amended hospice market basket language included. Minimizing the impact of these reductions is a necessary step to guaranteeing that all Americans retain access to compassionate, quality and cost effective end-of-life care.

End-of-life care is a fact of life for every single American. Regardless of insured status, socioeconomics, political preferences, or geography, we all overwhelmingly wish to die in a pain-free manner, with peace-of-mind and surrounded by our loved ones. NHPCO looks forward to working with you on this and future issues impacting end-of-life care.

Warmest Regards,

J. Donald Schumacher, PsyD
President/CEO
National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization