House Bill Preserves Medicare Patient Access to Doctor-Prescribed Equipment Says AAHomecare

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WASHINGTON, April 25, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Medicare patients are one step closer to ensuring continued access to much-needed home medical equipment thanks to the bipartisan efforts of Rep. Tom Price [1], M.D. (R-Ga.) and Rep. John Larson [2] (D-Conn.) Late last night, the two Congressmen, senior members of the House Ways and Means Committee [3], introduced a bill that will prevent the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services [4] (CMS) from implementing Round 2 of a controversial national bidding program [5] and replace it with a market pricing program [6].

H.R. 1717, the *Medicare DMEPOS Market Pricing Program Act of 2013*, will stop the bidding program, forcing CMS to adopt a market-based approach [6] to determine prices for home medical equipment that is prescribed by doctors for Medicare patients rather than relying on administrative price setting.

Homecare advocates say that the bill is a major victory for Medicare patients. "The market-based approach advocated by Rep. Price is supported by numerous patient advocacy groups, as well as by the homecare industry," says Joel D. Marx , chairman of Medical Service Company [7] in Cleveland, Ohio, and of the American Association for Homecare board of directors [8]. "It guarantees that patients will continue to have full access to home medical equipment services in a timely, competitive manner while assuring Medicare and taxpayers of the savings that are greatly needed in this era of unbalanced government budgets."

The bidding program, which has drawn scathing criticism from more than 240 economists [9], including five Nobel laureates, patient advocacy groups [10], and companies that provide home medical equipment through Medicare, had been set to roll out to 91 additional areas across the country on July 1. It was piloted in nine areas beginning in early 2011.

Chief among the critics' complaints are that the program is anti-competitive and results in widespread job losses and company closings that impair Medicare patients' ability to receive and use medical equipment their doctors have told them they must have in order to stay safely in their own homes and out of nursing homes and hospitals.

"H.R. 1717 will ensure that Medicare achieves its goal of reimbursing for home medical equipment using a market-based price. At the same time, the legislation will create the framework for a well-structured auction program that avoids the significant failures of the current program," said Tyler J. Wilson , president of AAHomecare. "The Price proposal presents a better system for beneficiary access to quality care and it will create an improved business environment for companies that

provide home medical equipment."

The American Association for Homecare represents providers of home medical or durable medical equipment and services who serve the needs of millions of Americans who require prescribed oxygen therapy, wheelchairs, enteral feeding, and other medical equipment, services, and supplies at home.
Visit www.aahomecare.org [11].

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