



601 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Suite 900, South Building
Washington, D.C. 20004-2601
Tel: 202-220-3172 Toll-Free: 1-866-360-7197
Email: contact@nrln.org Website: www.nrln.org Facebook:
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June 5, 2019

The Honorable Ron Wyden, Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3703

Dear Senator Wyden:

On behalf of the more than 2 million retirees and future retirees represented by the National Retiree Legislative Network, I am requesting that you support calling for a vote in the Committee on Finance on **S. 753, Improving Access To Medicare Coverage Act of 2019** and **S. 296, Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2019**.

Under the current Medicare policy, a beneficiary must have an “inpatient” hospital stay of at least three days in order for Medicare to cover post-hospitalization skilled nursing care. Patients that receive hospital care under “observation status” do not qualify for this benefit, even if their hospital stay lasts longer than three days.

S. 753 would update this loophole in Medicare policy to help protect seniors from high medical costs for the skilled nursing care they may require after hospitalization. Passage of the bill would allow for the time patients spend in the hospital under “observation status” to count toward the requisite three-day hospital stay for coverage of skilled nursing care.

S. 296 would improve the access Medicare beneficiaries have to home health care by allowing physician assistants, nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, and certified nurse midwives to order home health services. Under current law, only physicians are allowed to certify or initiate home health care for Medicare patients, even though they may not be as familiar with the patient's case.

There are far too many cases of seniors experiencing unnecessary delays in accessing home health care because the physician was not available to order the care promptly. To avoid these needless delays, it is common sense that other medical professionals who are familiar with a patient's case should be able to order these services.

It is very important that these two bills apply to participants in both original Medicare and Medicare Advantage (MA) plans. Approving benefit coverage for 20 million Medicare Advantage private plan enrollees but denying the same benefit for 38.8 million entitled to equal benefit coverage under Medicare Parts A & B makes no sense and violates the Presidents promise not to withhold or reduce Medicare benefits.

To learn more about why the NRLN supports **S. 753 and S. 296**, please ask a member of your staff to contact me or Alyson Parker, the NRLN's Executive Director in Washington, DC at 813-545-6792 or executivedirector@nrln.org .

The NRLN's full Legislative Agenda and detailed whitepapers can be found at www.nrln.org. Your consideration on these issues would be appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Kadereit". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Bill Kadereit, President,
National Retiree Legislative Network
Phone: 972-722-5928
Email: president@nrln.org