



Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities

For Immediate Release:

Barrett
April 14, 2011
4365

Contact: Matthew V.

Phone: (cell) (860) 373-

mbarrett@cahcf.com

**CAHCF Praises Representative Courtney for
Introducing Bill on Observation Stays**

- Legislation will allow Connecticut seniors access to critical Medicare benefit -

East Hartford, CT – The Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities (CAHCF) applauded Representative Joe Courtney (D-CT) for introducing legislation today that would ease the hardships for beneficiaries who need post-acute care in a skilled nursing facility following a hospital stay.

“Representative Courtney has been a champion for Connecticut’s seniors and we thank him for introducing this important legislation,” stated Matthew V. Barrett, Executive Vice President of CAHCF. “Beneficiaries who previously would be excluded from what Medicare considers part of a qualifying three-day hospital stay will now be able to access the critical skilled nursing facility services they need.”

“This commonsense change will ensure that seniors no longer face thousands of dollars in bills for skilled care because of an arbitrary federal policy,” said Congressman Courtney. “There are no two ways about it: three days in the hospital are three days in the hospital. Anyone who meets that threshold should receive the same benefit from Medicare.”

The legislation, the *Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act of 2011* also introduced by Representative Tom Latham (R-IA) and Senators John Kerry (D-MA) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME), amends the Social Security Act to ensure that time spent under observation status in a hospital counts toward satisfying the 3-day inpatient hospital requirement for coverage of skilled nursing facility services under Medicare.

In order to receive their Medicare Part A benefit to receive skilled nursing care following a hospital stay, patients must have been admitted to the hospital as an inpatient for three days. Often, they are instead admitted under observation status, resulting in forgoing their skilled nursing care due to cost, or paying out-of-pocket.

“Patients and their families need clarity and peace of mind, and this legislation will ease that burden on Connecticut seniors,” Barrett continued. “CAHCF encourages all of the Connecticut

delegation to co-sponsor this critical legislation to ensure continued access to skilled nursing care.”



April 14, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Josh Zembik (Courtney): 202.225.2105

Whitney Smith (Kerry): 202.224.4159

Brandon Bouchard (Snowe): 202.224.5344

Fred Love (Latham): 202.225.5476

Courtney, Kerry, Snowe, Latham introduce legislation to ensure skilled care for seniors

Bicameral, bipartisan bill is endorsed by AARP, American Medical Association, American Health Care Association, and the Center for Medicare Advocacy

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Joe Courtney (D-CT), U.S. Senators John Kerry (D-MA) and Olympia J. Snowe (R-ME) and Congressman Tom Latham (R-IA) today introduced legislation to fix an arbitrary Medicare policy that excludes coverage of skilled nursing care. Under current Medicare policy, a beneficiary must have an “inpatient” hospital stay of at least three days for Medicare to cover skilled nursing care. Patients who receive hospital care on “observation status” do not qualify for this benefit, even if their hospital stay lasts longer than three days.

The Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act 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.

“This commonsense change will ensure that seniors no longer face thousands of dollars in bills for skilled care because of an arbitrary federal policy,” **said Congressman Courtney**. “There are no two ways about it: three days in the hospital are three days in the hospital. Anyone who meets that threshold should receive the same benefit from Medicare.”

“When senior citizens get sick they need to know that they’ll get the care they need. The last thing they should have to worry about is a billing technicality that could saddle them with

outrageous out of pocket costs,” **Senator Kerry said.** “This bill will eliminate an unnecessary financial hardship on Medicare beneficiaries that can stand in the way of the skilled nursing care they need. I look forward to working with Senator Snowe and Congressman Courtney to bring some peace of mind to patients and their families.”

“When patients should be focusing on their recovery, far too many are caught off-guard by this ambiguous policy,” **said Senator Snowe.** “This bipartisan legislation provides much needed clarity and will ensure that patients receive the full coverage they deserve.”

“Congress needs to immediately address this unintended loophole in Medicare coverage that can cost seniors thousands in unexpected medical bills,” **Congressman Latham said.** “I have always supported measures to make sure that Medicare benefits provide seniors with affordable access to the highest quality health care available, and I am proud to work in bipartisan way with my House and Senate colleagues to resolve this oversight in Medicare policy.”

The bipartisan bill is endorsed by AARP, the American Medical Association, American Health Care Association, the Center for Medicare Advocacy, American Medical Directors Association, LeadingAge and the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare.

The legislation would:

- Amend Medicare law to count a beneficiary’s time spent in the hospital on “observation status” towards the three-day hospital stay requirement for skilled nursing care;
- Establish a 90-day appeal period following passage for those that have a qualifying hospital stay and have been denied skilled nursing care after January 1, 2011.