

HEALTHCARE
LEADERSHIP
COUNCIL

June 13, 2003

The Honorable William M. Thomas
Chairman
House Ways and Means Committee
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Healthcare Leadership Council commends you for your work to ensure that the nation's seniors will have access to affordable prescription drug coverage and choices of private health plans, and that lower income beneficiaries will have equal access to these options.

The Healthcare Leadership Council has been a long-time proponent of comprehensive Medicare modernization using private health care organizations to deliver care to seniors, and market competition to drive costs down and quality of care up.

The legislation being considered by House committees next week will help seniors access innovative treatments, technologies and chronic care support programs available to millions of private sector workers and government employees. Seniors would have access to better benefits and services because more private plans would be encouraged to compete for Medicare beneficiaries by offering the same quality of care improvements they are now offering to their privately insured customers. These integrated care improvements could help seniors live longer, be more active and better manage their health conditions.

We especially congratulate you on your proposal to facilitate a level field of competition between the government-run Medicare program and Medicare Advantage and the Enhanced Fee For Service programs. We strongly believe this provision will enable Medicare to more effectively meet the needs of seniors and do a better job of emulating the popularity of the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program, which achieves customer satisfaction by offering consumer choice.

Additionally, the House legislation would help reduce the burden of Medicare regulations on providers serving the traditional Medicare program, and would provide a new process for providers and suppliers to appeal coverage decisions. These provisions will help to improve and streamline Medicare's operations, and increase the willingness and ability of providers and suppliers to better serve seniors.

HLC believes it is imperative that Congress take bipartisan action to ensure the adequacy of current payments to Medicare providers so that the program can be modernized upon a stable foundation of high quality providers, plans, and suppliers.

We urge you to take action to give Medicare beneficiaries a prescription drug benefit and more private plan options this year. We appreciate your efforts to make this happen. We stand ready to work with you and other lawmakers dedicated to improving the Medicare program for seniors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary R. Grealy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "M".

Mary R. Grealy
President