



## MARSHFIELD CLINIC

November 21, 2003

The Honorable Rep. Bill Thomas  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Thomas:

On behalf of Marshfield Clinic, we are writing to commend you for your leadership, and voice our support for the "Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003." This bill is a small but very important step forward in the modernization of the Medicare program; it provides a modest drug benefit previously unavailable to seniors through the Medicare program, it reverses a 4.5 percent projected cut in physician reimbursement and replaces it with a 1.5 percent increase for the next two years, and makes improvements in the underlying economics of health care in predominantly rural areas through increases in Medicare's geographic adjustments of the physician work component.

The conference agreement will provide low co-payments for drugs for dual-eligible Medicare/Medicaid beneficiaries, drug coverage to those who need it most, coverage for those who have catastrophic drug costs, drug coverage for those with low incomes and those who depend upon Social Security for their income. The bill also includes provisions facilitating disease management programs for beneficiaries with chronic diseases, provisions for pay-for-performance demonstrations, incentives to share data on health quality, and provisions that will require the Secretary of HHS to evaluate the accuracy and validity of the data sources utilized for Medicare's geographic practice expense adjustments. For these reasons we urge passage of this legislation.

While this bill clearly does not accomplish all that we hoped for, we believe that all Wisconsin seniors will benefit from the expansion in benefits, and the economic climate in Wisconsin will begin to improve as the Medicare program begins to cover a more equitable share of the costs of Medicare patient care.

Thank you for your thoughtful efforts to improve the Medicare program, and your consideration of our concerns. If you have any questions about the issues we have raised, please do not hesitate to contact us or Brent Miller, Director of Federal Government Relations at 202 327-5463.

Sincerely,

Frederic Wesbrook, MD  
President

Reed Hall  
Executive Director

CC: Wisconsin Delegation  
Medicare Conferees