



Long Term Care Pharmacy Alliance

June 16, 2003

The Honorable William M. Thomas
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
1102 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thomas:

On behalf of the Long Term Care Pharmacy Alliance, I appreciate this opportunity to express our support for provisions of Medicare legislation you have advanced that address the special pharmacy needs of the nation's frail elderly beneficiaries residing in nursing facilities.

While most Medicare beneficiaries are able to walk into pharmacies to pick up their prescriptions or to receive vials of pills through the mail, a sizable percentage of beneficiaries cannot do so and need special services that retail and mail order pharmacies do not provide. Nursing home residents have specific diseases and multiple co-morbidities that require specialized pharmacy care.

To meet these needs, long-term care pharmacies provide specialized packaging, 24-hour delivery, infusion therapy services, geriatric-specific formularies, clinical consultation and other services that are indispensable in the long-term care environment. Without such treatment, we cannot expect positive therapeutic outcomes for these patients. Failure to take into consideration the special pharmacy needs of the frail and institutionalized elderly will lead to a marked increase in medication errors and other adverse events.

In recognition of these concerns, your proposed Medicare legislation would require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to review the current standards of practice for pharmacy services provided to patients in nursing facilities and to report to the Congress its findings prior to implementation of the new prescription drug benefit. This report would include a detailed description of the Department's plans to implement the provisions of this Act in a manner consistent with applicable state and federal laws designed to protect the safety and quality of care of nursing facility patients.

www.LTCPA.org
1025 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-327-5478 Fax: 202-327-5479



Long Term Care Pharmacy Alliance

The Honorable William M. Thomas
June 16, 2003
Page 2

In addition, the bill directs plan sponsors to implement medication therapy management programs as a tool to reduce medication errors and improve patient outcomes. Long-term care pharmacies currently employ such initiatives to meet the complex medication needs of nursing facility patients, and the bill appropriately allows plan sponsors' programs to distinguish between services provided in ambulatory and institutional settings.

Finally, the legislation includes provisions to ensure that beneficiaries are guaranteed access to pharmacy services, including emergency services. These provisions are vitally important to maintain the high standard of care for all beneficiaries – but particularly for patients in nursing facilities, who receive specialized pharmacy services 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week, through networks of long-term care pharmacies that contract with nursing facilities to meet their patients' needs.

We appreciate your leadership in carefully considering the multitude of complex issues related to the creation of a new Medicare prescription drug benefit. We are grateful for the chance to work constructively with you to protect patient safety and to ensure the continued provision of quality pharmacy services to the most vulnerable seniors.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at (202) 327-5478. Again, thank you for your efforts to ensure patient safety and promote quality care for Medicare beneficiaries residing in nursing facilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Baldwin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small flourish at the end.

Paul Baldwin
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Nancy L. Johnson
The Honorable Charles B. Rangel
The Honorable Forney H. Stark

www.LTCPA.org
1025 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-327-5478 Fax: 202-327-5479