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May 23, 2016

The Honorable Pat Tiberi
Chairman, Health Subcommittee
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jim McDermott
Ranking Member, Health Subcommittee
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Tiberi and Ranking Member McDermott:

On behalf of the Medicare Rights Center (Medicare Rights), I am writing to express support for Section 303 of the *Helping Hospitals Improve Patient Care Act of 2016* (H.R. 5273). Medicare Rights is a national, nonprofit organization that works to ensure access to affordable health care for older adults and people with disabilities through counseling and advocacy, educational programs, and public policy initiatives. Our organization serves more than two million Medicare beneficiaries, family caregivers, and professionals annually.

We applaud you for including a provision in this bipartisan legislation to enhance education and understanding among newly eligible Medicare beneficiaries about enrollment considerations and rules. Section 303 of H.R. 5273 outlines a formal process to update the “Welcome to Medicare” package mailed to newly eligible beneficiaries who are automatically enrolled in Medicare.

Medicare Rights fields nearly 17,000 questions on its national helpline each year. More than one in four of these calls concern enrollment, most often from individuals experiencing challenges enrolling in Medicare Part B. In 2014, the majority of these questions came from individuals who were navigating a specific hurdle or who did not understand enrollment periods. Many others declined Medicare Part B, questioned costs, inquired about eligibility, or presented some other challenge.¹

Enrollment errors affect tens of thousands of Americans in every state. Honest enrollment mistakes made by those delaying or declining Medicare Part B can lead to lifetime premium penalties, gaps in coverage, higher health care costs, disruptions in care continuity, and even tax penalties. We strongly believe improved tools and

¹ Morales, S., Schwarz, C., and F. Riccardi, “Medicare Trends and Recommendations: An Analysis of 2014 Call Data from the Medicare Rights Center’s National Helpline” (2016), available at: <http://www.medicarerights.org/2014-medicare-trends>

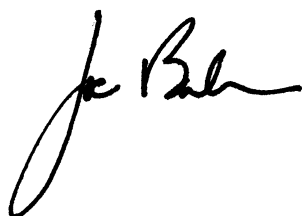
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educational content can help to minimize these adverse consequences. Still, other advancements are needed to smooth the transition to Medicare for newly eligible beneficiaries, including filling long-standing notification gaps, modernizing and aligning enrollment periods, and standardizing relief processes.

We look forward to working with you to pursue these and other solutions to ensure all individuals new to Medicare are prepared to make the enrollment decisions that are best for them. Thank you for making strengthened education and support for people new to Medicare a priority in H.R. 5273. If you have questions, please contact Stacy Sanders, Federal Policy Director, at ssanders@medicarerights.org or 202-637-0961.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Baker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "B".

Joe Baker
President
Medicare Rights Center