

November 11, 2008

United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

The undersigned organizations share a deep commitment to preserving and strengthening Medicare for current beneficiaries and future generations. Any reform of the health care system will inevitably affect Medicare and its beneficiaries. We want to work with you to ensure that efforts to ensure affordable, guaranteed, quality health care for all Americans will result in a stronger, financially stable Medicare program.

Health care reform provides Congress and the President with an opportunity to improve Medicare's finances, reducing the financial burden both on beneficiaries and on the federal government. For this reason, it will be absolutely critical to the future of Medicare that any health reform plan significantly curtail long-range cost growth across the health care system. Guided by the recommendations of the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, in particular those regarding payment neutrality for Medicare Advantage plans, Congress can achieve savings through improved efficiencies and modernized systems, freeing resources for improvements in the program that have long been necessary to meet beneficiary needs. Congress and the Administration have a unique opportunity to truly modernize the Medicare program for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Medicare can play a leading role in system-wide reforms that curb the growth in health care costs and make coverage affordable to taxpayers and consumers. We believe our nation will benefit if affordable, quality, health care is made available to all Americans, and that strengthening Medicare is an integral part of this reform. Medicare savings initiatives that shift costs onto beneficiaries or curtail eligibility, however, undermine the health security of those who rely on Medicare and are counter to the goal of ensuring affordable quality guaranteed health care for all.

We are convinced it is possible to design health care improvements that slow cost growth while improving health care for Medicare beneficiaries and expanding coverage to the uninsured. We look forward to working with you to achieve these important goals.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Retired Americans  
Alzheimer's Association  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)  
Center for Medicare Advocacy  
FamiliesUSA  
Medicare Rights Center  
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare  
National Senior Citizens Law Center  
OWL – The Voice of Midlife and Older Women