

**This letter was also sent to Senator Sherrod Brown*

March 14, 2013

The Honorable Joe Courtney
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Latham
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Courtney and Representative Latham:

On behalf of the millions of members and supporters of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, I am writing to thank you for once again introducing the “Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act.” It is our hope that action will be taken on this important issue during the current 113th Congress.

The “Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act” is important to Medicare beneficiaries who are hospitalized and then need skilled nursing facility (SNF) care, which, under current law, must be preceded by a three-day hospitalization. Today an increasing number of Medicare beneficiaries are hospitalized in observation (outpatient) status rather than being officially admitted as an inpatient, which means Medicare will not pay for their SNF care. Rather, beneficiaries are required to pay for expensive nursing home care themselves, or they may be forced to forego care if they cannot afford to pay. Your legislation would alleviate this situation by amending Medicare so that a period of observation status in a hospital would count toward satisfying the three-day inpatient hospital requirement to be eligible for the Medicare SNF benefit.

The National Committee supports eliminating the three-day prior hospitalization requirement for skilled nursing facility (SNF) eligibility. And, as an important first step, we support requiring that all time in the hospital be counted toward the three days – whether or not the individual is actually admitted to the hospital. The current requirement imposes significant costs on seniors who require nursing home care after a hospitalization in which they are not officially admitted as an inpatient.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. We look forward to continuing to work with you to improve the Medicare program that is so vital to today's seniors as well as future generations of beneficiaries.

Sincerely,



Max Richtman
President and CEO