



STATE OF GEORGIA  
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Nathan Deal  
GOVERNOR

July 7, 2011

The Honorable John A. Boehner  
Speaker  
H-232 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner,

As you consider legislation to address the federal debt ceiling and our nation's looming debt crisis, I would like to respectfully request your support in opposing a copayment requirement for Medicare and Medicaid-covered home healthcare services. Through my personal experience as a caregiver for my mother and my wife Sandra's parents, as the former chairman and ranking member of the Subcommittee on Health, and as governor for the State of Georgia, I am confident such a copayment requirement would only serve to shift thousands of low-income seniors out of home-based care into much more costly nursing homes and impose billions of dollars in additional Medicaid costs onto the states.

When I was the chairman of the Subcommittee on Health in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, you and I worked closely together to craft legislation that reduced our federal deficit by over \$100 billion. While working on the *Deficit Reduction Act of 2005*, one of the CBO-recommended savings options we carefully considered was imposing a copayment requirement on home healthcare services. However, we rejected this flawed proposal because we knew imposing a copayment on home-based care would provide a strong financial incentive for low-income families to shift their loved ones into institutions for their long-term care. Since most seniors prefer to receive care in their own home and institutional-based care imposes significantly greater costs on the taxpayers, we focused instead on ways to facilitate and incentivize home-based care through provisions such as the Medicaid state plan option for home and community based support services and the *Money Follows the Person Rebalancing Demonstration Program*. These have been successfully implemented in our home states of Georgia and Ohio. We further reduced taxpayer-funded long-term care spending by creating new tools to allow states to reduce the prevalence of Medicaid fraud and focus their limited Medicaid funds on individuals who are actually eligible for these taxpayer-funded benefits.



With the forthcoming debt ceiling debate, I believe my former colleagues in Congress have the same opportunity to reduce the federal deficit the right way – by reducing the prevalence of fraud in the Medicare and Medicaid programs, not by imposing burdensome copayment requirements on innocent seniors. I understand the home healthcare community has stepped forward with a thoughtful and comprehensive proposal, the *Skilled Home Health Integrity and Program Savings (SHHIPS) Act*, which would strengthen the integrity of the home health benefit with meaningful – and, in some cases, unprecedented – measures. This bold reform plan deserves your attention because it will establish much-needed fraud and abuse-fighting mechanisms and achieve substantial scorable savings. Indeed, former CBO Director Douglas Holtz-Eakin has analyzed these measures and determined they would save in excess of \$20 billion over the next 10 years. I respectfully urge your consideration of this bold reform plan. It is a far better solution than home healthcare copayments and cuts, it achieves sustainable savings, does not further burden state Medicaid programs, and it will erect strong barriers to the type of activity that has plagued patients and taxpayers for far too long.

As always, I appreciate your consideration of this request, and I appreciate your continued service to our nation and the people of Georgia. If I can ever be of assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

*Nathan Deal*

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Governor