

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 15, 2011

CONTACT: Katie Bruns (Snowe) 202-224-1304

Jodi Seth (Kerry) 202-224-4159

Senators Snowe, Kerry Introduce Legislation to Close Coverage Gap for Infusion Therapy

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Olympia J. Snowe (R-Maine) and John Kerry (D-Massachusetts) today introduced legislation that would close a gap in Medicare coverage for home infusion therapy, a medical treatment involving the administration of prescribed medication through a needle or catheter.

While most infusion drugs are covered under the Medicare Part D drug benefit, CMS determined that it does not have the authority to cover infusion-related services, supplies and equipment under Part D. As a result, Medicare beneficiaries are effectively denied access to home infusion therapy and forced to receive this treatment in hospitals and skilled nursing facilities at a significantly higher cost to Medicare and at great inconvenience to patients. The Medicare Home Infusion Therapy Coverage Act would cover home infusion therapy professional services, supplies, and equipment under Medicare Part B, thus enabling the Part D coverage of infusion drugs to become meaningful for Medicare beneficiaries. The bill also would require the Secretary to develop quality standards to ensure the safe and effective provision of therapy. This bill would enable Medicare to realize the efficiencies and positive outcomes that home infusion therapy has brought to private sector patients for decades.

“This cost-saving legislation will minimize unnecessary institutional treatment while improving the quality of health care for our seniors,” said Senator Snowe. “Infusion therapy is a safe and effective alternative to institutional care that allows seniors to receive appropriate medical treatments in the comfort of their own homes. I am pleased to reintroduce this measure with Senator Kerry and look forward to the Senate’s consideration of this common-sense legislation as we work to ensure the long-term viability and quality of Medicare benefits for our senior citizens.”

“It’s wrong and stupid to drag senior citizens out of their homes for medical care when they can get safer, more cost-effective infusion therapy right at home,” Senator Kerry said. “Olympia Snowe and I serve on the Finance Committee which can get results and we’re going to work with our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass this important legislation.”

Russell Bodoff, the President & CEO of the National Home Infusion Association, applauded the legislation. “The re-introduction of the *Medicare Home Infusion Therapy Coverage Act of 2011* offers a common sense approach to improving patient care, while reducing Medicare spending. In 2010 the General Accountability Office (GAO) completed a study which clearly demonstrated that home infusion therapy provides costs savings and quality patient care, with no unusual utilization. With the increasingly urgent need to reduce Medicare spending, this legislation and the GAO study findings represent an ideal opportunity for Congress to help find vital Medicare savings.”

###