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## **CMS Launches Wyden Initiative to Strengthen Hospice Care**

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Ron Wyden, D-Ore., applauded the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for moving forward with his initiative to increase access to hospice care for Medicare beneficiaries.

Today, CMS launched the Medicare Care Choices Model (MCCM). The MCCM, authorized by the Affordable Care Act, will test whether more seniors who qualify for coverage under the Medicare Hospice Benefit, would choose to receive the services typically provided by a hospice if they could also continue to receive curative care.

“This initiative represents a fundamental change in the way health care is delivered,” said Wyden, who authored the legislation authorizing the program. “Patients and their families should have every choice available to them when faced with life-threatening illness. Allowing Medicare coverage to continue while under hospice care means that patients no longer have to make a false choice between hospice and curative care.”

CMS will study whether access to such services results in improved quality of care and patient and family satisfaction, and whether there are any effects on use of curative services and the Medicare Hospice Benefit.

Currently, Medicare Hospice Benefit enrollees currently must forgo curative treatment – which oftentimes discourages patients from seeking hospice care that may help them cope with their advanced terminal illness.

According to Medicare claims data, only 44 percent of Medicare patients use the hospice benefit, and most use the benefit for only a short period of time. This model encourages beneficiaries to receive palliative care services that are provided by the MCCM participating hospice concurrently with services from their curative care provider.

Eligibility is targeted to Medicare certified and enrolled hospice programs of all sizes and located in a mix of rural and urban areas. Interested hospices will have 90 days to file an application with CMS. Once hospices are selected, eligible beneficiaries will be able to receive the enhanced services for participating hospices.

For additional information about the Medicare Care Choices Model, including the Request for Applications, please visit the Innovation Center website at:  
<http://innovation.cms.gov/initiatives/Medicare-Care-Choices>

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