

September 28, 2011

Representative Jeb Hensarling
129 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Patty Murray
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Hensarling and Senator Murray,

Our organizations represent millions of seniors, persons with disabilities, military veterans, and family members who depend upon America's Medicare and Medicaid programs.

We understand the importance of addressing the nation's fiscal challenges and securing a sustainable healthcare system. Achieving these objectives, however, does not have to entail changes that increase the burden on beneficiaries or weaken the benefit on which they depend. Rather, savings and sustainability can be achieved while strengthening the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

Specifically, we firmly believe program integrity should be a top priority of the Joint Select Committee. Evidence has proven that real savings can be gleaned through improved program integrity as federal officials just recently announced 91 people spread across eight cities were charged with filing a combined \$295 million in fraudulent Medicare charges. This is an encouraging start, but is unfortunately, only a drop in the bucket for potential savings.

As you know, 10 percent of Medicare and Medicaid spending is lost to improper payments, fraud and abuse each year. This amounts to tens of billions of dollars. Given the need to identify as much as \$1.5 trillion in savings, it is clear that improved program integrity presents not only an opportunity but an imperative.

As a result, we believe a top priority should be stopping the flow of dollars that now goes to criminals engaged in fraudulent and abusive practices — not increasing innocent beneficiaries' out-of-pocket costs or cutting the funds that go to meeting Medicare and Medicaid patient needs.

Our organizations stand ready to work with you on solutions that can be implemented now to achieve billions of dollars in savings without negatively impacting beneficiaries, their families, their providers, or their benefits.

Let us not miss this opportunity to achieve substantial savings, strengthen America's Medicare and Medicaid programs, and ensure that the needs of America's most vulnerable citizens are met. By fighting fraud first, we can make a meaningful difference.

Sincerely,

AARP
AIDS United
Alliance for Aging Research
Alzheimer's Foundation of America
Easter Seals
HealthHIV
Medicare Rights Center
Men's Health Network
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
National Association for Uniformed Services
National Association for Home Care & Hospice
National Family Caregivers Association
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Minority Quality Forum
OWL - The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
RetireSafe
Partnership for Quality Home Healthcare
PHI – Quality Care through Quality Jobs
The National Grange
The Retired Enlisted Association
Veterans Health Council
Vietnam Veterans of America
Visiting Nurse Associations of America