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Consumer Groups Say New Accountable Care Organization Rule is a Reasonable Compromise, Urge All Parties to Get On-Board to Ensure Patients Will Soon Benefit from Better Coordinated, More Patient-Centered Care

Statement of Campaign for Better Care Leader Debra L. Ness

“The final rule on Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs), released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services today, has provisions that will both please and concern various parties. As advocates for consumers, particularly for our oldest and sickest patients who urgently need better-coordinated care, we applaud this effort to incentivize better primary care, increase coordination, and share accountability across providers. We are very pleased that this final rule will require ACOs to adhere to strong patient-centered criteria, use beneficiary experience of care measures to evaluate performance, and ensure full transparency, notification and choice for beneficiaries. These provisions are all essential to realizing the promise of successful ACOs, which patients in this country are counting on.

This new rule is not perfect, but it provides a path away from the broken, dysfunctional health care system we have today toward a system that offers higher quality, better coordinated and more patient-centered care.

We consider it most unfortunate that the provisions requiring beneficiary participation on ACO boards have been tempered. We urge the Department to closely monitor these provisions to ensure that consumers and beneficiaries are engaged in the design, governance and assessment of ACOs in their communities. We will be watching closely to assess whether ACOs operate in the public interest and reflect the needs and perspectives of the communities they serve. Consumers and patients hope and expect that these provisions will be strengthened down the road if needed.

In the end, we see this rule as a reasonable compromise. The Department was enormously responsive to the comments that were filed and in particular, to concerns raised by providers. It is time now for all parties to come together to create successful ACOs that deliver care that is truly patient-centered, that improves quality and care coordination, and that lowers costs. This new model of care deserves to be tested along with the numerous other innovations that have and will be promoted by the CMS Innovation Center. Patients and consumers have no time to waste.

The stakes are too high to ignore the promise that ACOs offer to improve care and bring us better value for our health care dollars. We must not let opponents of reform use any remaining differences to block the progress Americans so urgently need. Transformation is never easy, but the cost of failure to patients, families and the country is simply too high.”

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The [Campaign for Better Care](#) is a multi-faceted national effort to protect vulnerable older patients with multiple health problems and ensure they can access well-coordinated, quality health care. It is led by the National Partnership for Women & Families, Community Catalyst, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, and the National Health Law Program. The CBC has built a broad-based consumer coalition with more than 150 organizations.