

Dear Member of Congress:

I am writing on behalf of the thousands of people with disabilities that reside in our state. The Medicare Modernization Act (MMA) includes a provision that will adversely affect people with disabilities that have a medical need for high-tech rehab and assistive technology. The MMA calls for competitive acquisition of durable medical equipment, which includes high-tech rehab and assistive technology, beginning in 2007 and phased in over the next several years.

High-tech rehab and assistive technology consists of power wheelchairs, manual wheelchairs, seating and positioning products as well as speech generating devices that are uniquely selected, measured, fitted or adapted in consideration of a patient's anatomical dimensions, disability, period of need or intended use. Moreover, this technology is intended for a specific individual patient's use. The proper equipment is critical to ensure that people with disabilities maintain their independence and meet their functional goals. In addition, proper equipment has a significant role in preventing or delaying related medical complications (like bed sores), which can increase healthcare costs significantly. High-tech rehab and assistive technology must be evaluated and recommended to meet the specific needs of each individual.

Competitive acquisition puts product choice at risk in lieu of reduced reimbursement. In addition, today, most rehab and assistive technology suppliers utilize a technology assessment and home evaluation performed by credentialed staff as important tools in determining the appropriate technology for Medicare beneficiaries. Due to the costs associated with these evaluations and assessments, which are not reimbursed separately, but assumed bundled into the product reimbursement, it is likely that competitive acquisition will cause suppliers to eliminate these important services. People with disabilities have very specific and unique needs that must be identified by a team of healthcare professionals. The processes necessary to determine the appropriate technology is critical.

Secretary Leavitt has the authority to exempt products from the national competitive acquisition program. The MMA specifically provides the Secretary this authority when either the savings prove insufficient or it could cause a adverse clinical outcome for the beneficiary. As this letter indicates, national competitive acquisition has the potential of adversely affecting people with disabilities. I respectfully request a letter from you to Secretary Leavitt encouraging that he uses his authority to exempt high-tech rehab and assistive technology from the competitive bidding acquisition program.

Sincerely,

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_