

National Hospice and Palliative Care
Organization



April 1, 2015

The Honorable Lynn Jenkins
1526 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Thompson
231 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Jenkins and Congressman Thompson,

On behalf of hospice programs across the nation, their professionals, volunteers and most importantly, the patients and families they serve, the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) is writing to express our support of H.R. 1202, the *Medicare Patient Access to Hospice Act of 2015*. At a time when hospice programs are threatened by rising transportation costs, as well as a lack of physicians and nurse practitioners, H.R. 1202 takes a practical step towards ensuring that compassionate, high-quality, cost effective end-of-life care will be available for future generations.

Numerous challenges have been thrust upon the hospice community in quick succession in recent years. Providers are facing the impact of cuts to reimbursement rates, significant regulatory changes, and an even more uncertain future as hospice payment reform is looming. Hospices in rural and other medically-underserved areas are seeing especially painful circumstances- many simply cannot afford to hire qualified physicians to provide care.

The *Medicare Patient Access to Hospice Act of 2015* will assist in mitigating these challenges to accessing the Medicare hospice benefit by allowing physician assistants (PAs) to provide hospice care to those patients who elect Medicare's hospice benefit. In some areas, a PA may be the only healthcare professional in the community. By allowing certified PA's to provide hospice care, programs will be able to keep up with the ever-growing pool of Americans choosing to elect hospice at the end of life, regardless of location.

NHPCO commends your leadership on the advancement of end-of-life care. We strongly support passage of this important legislation, and look forward to working with you on this and future legislation that meets the need for all Americans to have access to quality end-of-life care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J. Donald Schumacher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

J. Donald Schumacher, PsyD
President/CEO