



December 3, 2015

The Honorable Chris Coons  
United States Senate  
127A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Diane Black  
United States House of Representatives  
1131 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bill Cassidy  
United States Senate  
703 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Thompson  
United States House of Representatives  
231 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Coons and Cassidy and Representatives Black and Thompson,

On behalf of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), I am writing to express our support for the *Medicare Choices Empowerment and Protection Act of 2015* (S. 2297/H.R. 4059).

NHPCO is the largest nonprofit membership organization representing hospice and palliative care programs and professionals in the United States. We represent over 4,000 hospice programs that care for the majority of hospice patients in the country. The organization is committed to improving end-of-life care and expanding access to hospice care with the goal of profoundly enhancing quality of life for people dying in America and their loved ones.

More and more Americans are facing advanced illness, aging with multiple chronic health conditions, and lacking the resources to plan for their care and obtain the support they need for themselves and their families. Yet a minority of Americans thinks about or plans for end-of-life care. A 2014 NHPCO survey shows that only 26.3 percent of respondents had an advance directive.

We believe that the *Medicare Choices Empowerment and Protection Act of 2015* will address this challenge by offering Medicare beneficiaries incentives to establish advance directives. These incentives will result in more Americans actively considering and documenting end-of-life wishes in advance directives.

It is important to note, however, that advance care planning is a process, not a single decision. Patient goals for end-of-life wishes often change over time. As this legislation is considered by Congress, we encourage you to consider modifying the bill to support provisions to incentivize individuals to revisit and revise their advanced directives. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you to strengthen this important legislation.

We thank you for your leadership on advance care planning, and look forward to working with you to increase the number of Americans with advance directives.

Sincerely,

J. Donald Schumacher, PsyD  
President/CEO