



July 22, 2015

The Honorable Eliot Engel
2462 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Reed
2437 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Engel and Reed,

On behalf of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), I thank you for your leadership on the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (H.R. 3119). NHPCO is pleased to support this legislation. NHPCO 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. Palliative care is a key aspect of ensuring patient comfort and quality of life.

Palliative care is an inherently patient-centered model of care that must explore and assess all treatment options in the context of the individual's values and symptoms. Research continues to show that access to palliative care at the end of life not only improves, but can increase, a patient's last days and weeks. However, as research from the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine indicates, there is a shortage of physicians and healthcare providers trained in palliative care. And while the nation's population is beginning to age, the current rates of educating and training medical professionals in palliative care will not be sufficient to ensure widespread access to quality palliative care to this population at the end of life.

The Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA) will allow the medical community to make great strides in the education and training of professionals in palliative care. PCHETA will fund programs to provide clinical palliative medicine training in a variety of settings, including hospice, and develop specific measures to evaluate the competency of trainees. The Palliative Medicine and Hospice Academic Career Award program will enable hospice and palliative physicians to train members of teams of interdisciplinary healthcare professionals in palliative and hospice care techniques. This legislation will further expand the variety of professionals trained to provide hospice care, including nurses and clinical social workers. This program is especially important to the hospice community because of the reliance on the (IDT) to effectively care for patients.

NHPCO applauds your leadership on improving end-of-life care. We want to add our support to 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 palliative care at the end of life.

Sincerely,

J. Donald Schumacher, Psy.D.
President and CEO