



## **LifeSpan Network Fights Medicare Cuts to Nursing Homes Proposed in Federal Healthcare Reform Bill**

**Letter to Maryland Senate Delegation urges restoration of funding continued commitment to Maryland seniors.**

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*Letter from Isabella Firth, LifeSpan Network President, to Maryland U.S. Senators Barbara Mikulski and Ben Cardin:*

On behalf of the LifeSpan Network, the State's leading senior healthcare provider association, I write to express our members' concern regarding significant cuts to Medicare reimbursement for Maryland's skilled nursing facilities. Earlier this year, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) ruled that the agency intended to cut \$360 million in Medicare payments to nursing homes in fiscal year 2010. This cut however, would have further reaching consequences than a one year reduction and equate to a \$10 to \$18 billion loss for providers over the next decade.

A reduction of this magnitude is simply unsustainable, especially in light of recent cuts made at the State level. In July of this year, Maryland's Board of Public Works voted to reduce Medicaid reimbursement by \$23 million after initial cuts to the 2010 budget were made during the legislative session. All told, Maryland nursing homes are under-funded \$132 million. In essence nursing homes and more importantly the vulnerable seniors they care for are being threatened by the two main funding streams of long term care, Medicare and Medicaid.

Our members who provide quality healthcare services to the frailest seniors on a 365 day, 24 hour basis, believe that our nation through the Medicare program and the State through Medicaid must follow through on the commitment made to seniors, in the same time fashion that nursing homes maintain their commitment to delivering quality care. What sense does it make to expand healthcare coverage for the uninsured while at the same time cutting services to those already covered through public programs? Our members and again more importantly the seniors under their care do not feel that constitutes healthcare reform.

Above and beyond jeopardizing the quality of care afforded to Maryland's seniors, the proposed CMS cuts will likely limit access to care by forcing the bankruptcy and closure of nursing homes. Such a scenario is more than likely considering the level of cuts

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proposed and the inability of the State to fill gaps as it struggles with its own fiscal issues. Seniors would be left with diminished options for care and hundreds if not thousands of jobs could be lost.

Our members urge you to fight for our seniors and stop the CMS cuts to Medicare. Now is not the time for our nation to turn its back on seniors but rather make sure they receive the care and treatment they have been promised and deserve.