

NACDEP
National Coalition for Dually Eligible People

A Louisiana Not-for-Profit Corporation

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The Honorable
United States Senate/House
Washington, D.C. 20510/5

Stop healthcare discrimination
Support the Louisiana Resolution to Restore Equal Access to Medicare

Dear Senator/Representative,

We need your help. In June 2009, the Louisiana State Legislature unanimously passed House Concurrent Resolution 173, requesting the U.S. Congress restore Medicare-Medicaid crossover payments so all Medicare beneficiaries have equal access to their Medicare benefits. Another resolution, HCR 171, requests the Louisiana Dept. of Health and Hospitals “assist and support” your efforts.

The Louisiana Legislature has done its job. It is now up to you, the Louisiana congressional delegation, and the U.S. Congress to restore healthcare justice for 108,000 poor Medicare beneficiaries in Louisiana and five million people nationwide. Poor Medicare beneficiaries with Medicaid are dually eligible people; they are the oldest, poorest, sickest, and most disabled people in the nation.*

Dually eligible people are the most costly population covered by any public healthcare program; they are a fundamental part of the healthcare debate. In 2005, dually eligible people cost almost \$200 billion. The 7 million dually eligible Medicare beneficiaries cost more government money than 30 million non-dually eligible beneficiaries.

The Congressional Balanced Budget Act of 1997 decreased the Medicare benefit for dually eligible people, which decreased their access to health care. As access to primary care physicians decreases, expensive emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and nursing home admissions increase. Therefore, decreasing access to health care for our most expensive and fastest growing Medicare population is financially reckless.

* For discussion and background, see “Healthcare Discrimination in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Nationwide: A Case Study of Dually Eligible People with Medicare and Medicaid,” on our web site, <http://www.nacdep.org>. See also the video presentation to the New Orleans City Council on December 18, 2008, on our web site.

The Balanced Budget Act decreased Medicare access for poor Medicare beneficiaries who are disproportionately elderly minorities and mentally and physically disabled people. This Act violates the intent of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the CMS Civil Rights Compliance Policy.

Restoring Medicare-Medicaid crossover payments is supported by the:

State of Louisiana

American Medical Association

American Geriatrics Society

Louisiana State Medical Society

Louisiana Geriatrics Society

Louisiana Medical Association

Louisiana Psychiatric Medical Association

Louisiana Medical Directors Association

Louisiana Dept of Health and Hospitals

Orleans Parish Medical Society

Jefferson Parish Medical Society

St. Bernard Parish Medical Society

New Orleans Medical Association

New Orleans City Council

New Orleans Council on Aging

New Orleans Health Department

New Orleans NAACP

The paper, “Louisiana Asks Congress to Stop Healthcare Discrimination for Five Million Dually Eligible People with Medicare and Medicaid,” describes a program to restore access for dually eligible people, stop civil rights violations, decrease government-induced healthcare disparities, and help state Medicaid agencies — at little cost to taxpayers. All Medicare beneficiaries worked, paid payroll taxes, and earned the same Medicare benefits. Let Louisiana lead the nation in healthcare justice for these five million people. I look forward to working with you. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Sheldon Hersh, MD, President

National Coalition for Dually Eligible People

Enclosures:

- Position Paper: Louisiana Asks Congress to Stop Healthcare Discrimination
- Text of Louisiana HCR 173
- Patient Petition to Restore Equal Access to Medicare
- MedPAC summary of Secretary Thompson’s 2003 Report to Congress

CC: Senator Mary Landrieu
Senator David Vitter
Representative Rodney Alexander
Representative Charles Boustany
Representative Anh Cao
Representative Bill Cassidy
Representative John Fleming
Representative Charlie Melancon
Representative Steve Scalise