

Sen. Landrieu expresses concern for proposed cuts to the Medicare home health benefit, which threaten patient access to skilled home health for 78,000 Louisiana seniors

WASHINGTON, Sept. 19, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Partnership for Quality Home Healthcare - a coalition of home health providers dedicated to improving the program integrity, quality, and efficiency of home healthcare for our nation's seniors – today thanked Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Chair of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, for voicing her concern regarding the 14 percent cut to Medicare home health payments proposed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

In June, CMS proposed to rebase Medicare by home health payments at a rate of 3.5 percent over the next four years. If implemented in its current form, these cuts will result in a 14 percent overall reduction to Medicare home health payments. Such drastic cuts will cause 47 out of 50 states, including Louisiana, and the District of Columbia to have negative Medicare margins by 2017.

Louisiana will have an overall negative Medicare margin of -1.6 percent with 59.7 percent of its home health agencies operating at a net loss by 2017.

In a letter to Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, Senator Landrieu respectfully urges that CMS review the methodology used to calculate the proposed rebasing percentage, noting that beneficiary access to vital home health services is critical as baby boomers age into Medicare.

Furthermore, Senator Landrieu notes that small, rural agencies will be significantly impacted by such a dramatic cut stating, "...these small home health agencies disproportionately service rural and medically underserved areas- with over 40 percent of the smallest home health agencies operating in counties or parishes that are entirely designated as a health professional shortage area."

Many home health agencies will be rendered inoperable, closing their doors to some of Medicare's sickest and most vulnerable patients. These agencies simply cannot operate with reimbursements below the actual cost of care.

"We commend Senator Landrieu for her leadership in protecting access to vital home health services for our nation's seniors and stand ready to work with her and other Members of Congress to preserve the Medicare home health benefit," stated Eric Berger, CEO of the Partnership for Quality Home Healthcare. "We urge CMS to consider her concerns, as well as those of the [Small Business Administration](#) and others in Congress, and reevaluate their proposed regulation."

Widely recognized as clinically advanced, cost-effective and patient preferred, nearly 3.5 million seniors nationwide receive the Medicare home health benefit.

SOURCE Partnership for Quality Home Healthcare