



1/21/2016

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
219 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee
219 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
Co-Chair, Chronic Care Working Group
131 Russell Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mark Warner
Co-Chair, Chronic Care Working Group
475 Russell Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Response to *Bipartisan Chronic Care Working Group Policy Options Document*
Submitted electronically via chronic_care@finance.senate.gov

Dear Chairman Hatch, Ranking Member Wyden, Senator Isakson and Senator Warner:

I am writing in response to the recommendation by the Bipartisan Chronic Care Working Group to carve the Medicare Hospice Benefit into the Medicare Advantage plans. My primary concern around this recommendation is that it will most certainly limit access to hospice services for MA constituents. I have reviewed the Policy Options Document and can clearly see that is not the goal of the committee.

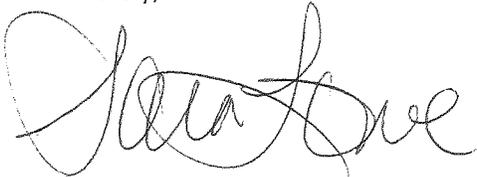
I want to give you a recent example of something that happened with a Medicaid HMO/Advantage recipient. We received a referral from a local hospital for an individual who was actively dying and had an uncontrolled bleed and was in need of hospice care. It was New Year's Day, this person had no family, and a Medicaid HMO/Advantage plan that had earned a reputation of not paying in-network hospices for care provided. As a result no area hospice in the second largest city in Michigan was in-network. We admitted this individual, with insurance, under charitable care and ensured that he was comfortable in his final two days of life. We did that because we are called to do so by our mission. However, if we need to do that more and more frequently with Medicare Advantage plans, it will quickly become an unsustainable model.

In addition to my primary concern regarding limiting access to the hospice benefit this proposal will also have the following unintended consequences; diluting the quality and integrity of the hospice benefit by only allowing for certain services or limited number of services, increasing the administrative burden on hospices. As a local, non-profit hospice we would not be able to absorb these tasks into our current staffing model which means we would need to add staff to do administrative work of negotiating and billing multiple MA plans. As a result I may be required to take care away from the bedside of the

terminally ill in our community. This has the potential to threaten access to quality hospice care and the financial stability of local hospice providers like Emmanuel Hospice.

If you have any questions or would like to further discuss this issue with me I am glad to do so. Please contact me at (616) 719-0919 or my email slowe@emmanuelhospice.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sara Lowe". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and address.

Sara T. Lowe, Executive Director
Emmanuel Hospice
2161 Leonard St NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49504