



July 7, 2017

**Re: TIME SENSITIVE REQUEST: Please Sign on to Senate Letter on Access to DME for Medicare Beneficiaries in Rural Areas**

Dear Senator:

The ITEM Coalition Steering Committee urges you to sign on to a bipartisan letter from your Senate colleagues, John Thune and Heidi Heitkamp, to HHS Secretary Tom Price and CMS Administrator Seema Verma regarding patient access to durable medical equipment (DME) in the Medicare program. Specifically, the letter requests that HHS swiftly use its regulatory authority to provide relief to providers and suppliers of DME in non-competitively bid areas (i.e., rural areas). DME suppliers are currently absorbing significant reimbursement cuts that, ultimately, are negatively impacting patient access to vital home medical equipment and supplies.

Medicare beneficiaries have experienced interruptions in continuity of care and barriers to access to DME as a result of a flawed approach to reimbursement for DME in non-competitively bid areas. CMS has imposed dramatic reimbursement cuts in sparsely populated rural areas for vital devices and related services.

Congress has acted in the past to avoid short-term disruptions in beneficiary access; however, CMS can and should use its regulatory authority to provide long-term solutions to this problem of beneficiary access to care. Senators Thune and Heitkamp's letter, attached to this message, requests that the Department use its regulatory authority to solve this significant problem.

The deadline to sign on to the letter is Monday, July 11<sup>th</sup>. We encourage you to join Senators Thune and Heitkamp in their efforts to ensure Medicare beneficiaries in rural areas have access to vital DME services and supplies.

We would be happy to meet to discuss this issue further and are available for any questions that you may have. To contact the ITEM Coalition, please contact the ITEM Coalition coordinators, Peter Thomas, at [Peter.Thomas@powerslaw.com](mailto:Peter.Thomas@powerslaw.com) or Leif Brierley at [Leif.Brierley@powerslaw.com](mailto:Leif.Brierley@powerslaw.com), or by calling 202-466-6550.

Sincerely,

**ITEM Coalition Steering Committee Members**

Amputee Coalition  
American Foundation for the Blind  
Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation  
National Multiple Sclerosis Society  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
United Spinal Association

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The ITEM Coalition is a national consumer and clinician-led coalition advocating for access to and coverage of assistive devices, technologies, and related services for persons with injuries, illnesses, disabilities, and chronic conditions of all ages. Our members represent individuals with a wide range of disabling conditions, as well as the providers who serve them, including such conditions as multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injuries, brain injuries, stroke, paralysis, limb loss, cerebral palsy, hearing and speech impairments, visual impairments, vision loss, spina bifida, myositis, and other life-altering conditions.