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## AARP Urges Senate to Pass “Seniors’ Amendment”

AARP declares SGR amendment a “Key Vote”—will inform members of how each Senator votes

**WASHINGTON, DC**—Yesterday evening, AARP sent a letter to each U.S. Senator urging them to support the “Seniors’ Amendment” to the *Medicare and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA) of 2015*, based on bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Collins (R-ME) and Cardin (D-MD). AARP informed the Senators that we would track their individual votes on the amendment as an “AARP Key Vote.” AARP will report back to our 38 million members and the public how each Senator votes on this key amendment.

“The “Seniors’ Amendment” removes the arbitrary cap on therapy services which hurts beneficiaries who need these services. Similar to the SGR debate, an extension of the therapy cap—rather than full repeal—is short-sighted and puts beneficiaries in a dire situation when the extension expires,” said AARP Executive Vice President Nancy LeaMond in AARP’s letter to Senators. “This amendment is important to the overall success of the Medicare program and the health and well-being of Medicare’s beneficiaries.”

The full text of the AARP’s letter to the Senators is below:

April 13, 2015

Dear Senator:

AARP and its nearly 38 million members applaud the progress made toward repealing the sustainable growth rate (SGR). However, the bill passed by the House and being voted on by the Senate can still be made better for beneficiaries. We urge you to support the “Seniors’ Amendment” to the *Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA) of 2015* in order to improve the bill for older Americans and people with disabilities. Therefore, we are making the vote on the “Seniors’ Amendment” a Key Vote, and we will be notifying our members and the general public of how each Senator voted on this important amendment.

The reimbursement policies within MACRA move Medicare in the right direction. We appreciate the emphasis toward more coordinated care, the streamlined quality reporting system, the greater use of quality measurements, and greater data transparency, among other improvements.

However, we continue to believe that the offsets for the *Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act* place an unbalanced burden on beneficiaries. AARP and other consumer and aging organizations remain concerned that beneficiaries account for the largest portion of budget offsets (roughly \$35 billion) through greater out-of-pocket expenses. This is on top of the higher Part B premiums that will be paid by all beneficiaries -- estimated at \$120 more per year -- as a result of continuing current policy to prevent the SGR cut from occurring (and other physician updates).

Furthermore, while MACRA makes important Medicare extenders like the Qualifying Individual program permanent, others remain temporary. These extenders and programs are crucial to ensuring beneficiaries receive needed care and services.

We, and other consumer and aging organizations, have worked to ensure that any Medicare reimbursement reform legislation is in the best interest of Medicare’s beneficiaries. This amendment will help fix the imbalance of the current bill. Specifically, it will:

- Repeal the cap on physical therapy, speech-language pathology, and occupational therapy services. The cap was originally part of the 1997 legislation that created the flawed physician payment formula, and -- as with the SGR -- has been repeatedly addressed on a temporary basis. Permanent repeal of the SGR should also permanently deal with the cap on therapy services, and this is particularly important to stroke victims and those suffering from diseases such as Parkinson’s or Multiple Sclerosis.

The “Seniors’ Amendment” effectively addresses many of AARP’s concerns with the legislation by making it more fair and balanced for Medicare beneficiaries, who are being asked to shoulder most of the financial burden for higher provider reimbursement rates.

This amendment is important to the overall success of the Medicare program and the health and well-being of Medicare’s beneficiaries. We will monitor each Senator’s vote on this amendment and:

- Publicly publish vote results and notify our membership how each Senator has voted on this issue; and
- Include this vote in our legislative summary at the end of the Congressional session.

Sincerely,

Nancy A. LeaMond

Executive Vice President

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