



July 24, 2007

Congress of the United States  
The Honorable John D. Dingell  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce

Congress of the United States  
The Honorable Joe Barton  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Commerce

Dear Chairman Dingell and Rep. Barton:

I am writing on behalf of the Clinical Social Work Association to express our strong support for legislative language within the proposed Children's Health and Medicare Protection (CHAMP) Act which restores to clinical social workers and psychologists Medicare reimbursement that was cut in January, 2007.

This provision will bring payments for mental health treatment to Medicare beneficiaries back to payment levels which were in place prior to the application of the 5-year review rule. These services are provided primarily by clinical social workers and psychologists and the \$30 million cut in reimbursement was a terrible hardship for clinicians who provide mental health services to some of our most vulnerable citizens. Your legislation will help maintain the viability of the Medicare outpatient mental health benefit. Many clinical social workers and psychologists have been contemplating reducing or ending their Medicare caseloads, and have been quite concerned about the emotional well-being of their clients.

The CMS's 5-year review rule was well-intended, but it 'robbed Peter to pay Paul' by funding the needed increase in physician evaluation and management (E&M) services by decreasing money for mental health services. CSWA appreciates the need for budget neutrality as required by statute but clinical social workers and psychologists who provide the most labor intensive services, i.e., mental health treatment, experienced unmanageable reductions in reimbursement. The return to psychotherapy payments as before the 5-year rule was applied in your legislation will go a long way toward mitigating the damage caused to access to Medicare mental health services.

Medicare beneficiaries already confront significant barriers to accessing mental health treatment. Most problematic among these is the discriminatory 50% coinsurance associated with psychotherapy services, compared with the 20% required for almost all other Medicare services.

CSWA deeply appreciates your commitment to the mental health of seniors and persons with disabilities in the Medicare program and we look forward to working with you to pass this vital legislation.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Laura Groshong, LICSW, Director, CSWA Government Relations