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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE
WORKFORCE

August 17, 2011

URGENT

Donald M. Berwick, M.D.
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Administrator Berwick:

I write to request your immediate attention to a systemic Medicaid computer catastrophe in the State of Ohio which has affected thousands of seniors and disabled individuals in Ohio's 10th Congressional District and tens of thousands more across the State.

As you know, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) recently switched from the Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS) to the Medicaid Information Technology System (MITS) while still using the Client Registry Information System – Enhanced (CRIS-E) system. Somewhere in this switch, or through related data interpretation and application, at least three large-scale and tragic problems have resulted. All three are issues for which immediate solutions are urgently needed.

First, ODJFS has expunged en masse approximately 15,000 Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare Savings Programs, such as QMB^[1], SLMB^[2], and QI-1^[3], and receiving monthly Medicaid assistance. This assistance pays their monthly Medicare Part B premium (between \$96.40 and \$115.40), and for some, pays Medicare coinsurance or copayments. Instead of going case-by-case to determine continued eligibility, ODJFS blanketly passed its error off to seniors and the disabled with incomes around \$1,000 per month. Several of these individuals that have been erroneously terminated have contacted me because their Social Security benefits have been reduced as a result. They and I am told by ODJFS that individuals need to reapply for benefits. This is unacceptable and is causing an undue financial hardship for many.

Second, many Medicaid beneficiaries and their pharmacists have reported the inability to fill needed prescriptions despite having a valid Medicaid card in hand. Valid coverage, although existing, somehow does not appear in the computer system on the pharmacy

[1] Qualified Medicare Beneficiary

[2] Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary

[3] Qualified Individual-1

end. While I am not entirely sure whether this is just an issue for "spend-down" beneficiaries or for all Medicaid beneficiaries, the inability of anyone on Medicaid to obtain potentially life-sustaining medications is dire, especially when they can prove Medicaid coverage.

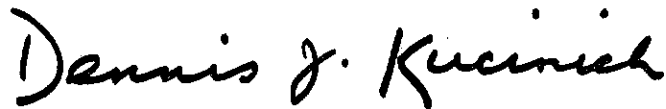
Third, I have been contacted by at least two Medicaid providers stating that Medicaid payments have been delayed due to a computer glitch. These providers depend on timely payments to remain in business and continue to serve Medicaid beneficiaries.

In this age of superior technology, ODJFS and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have a responsibility to ensure that any systemic transition or decision is made with assurance that errors like this do not occur. Since these errors have already occurred, CMS needs to take the following steps to mediate them:

1. Establish a toll-free hotline solely for expedited re-establishment of eligibility;
2. Ensure ODJFS immediately notifies all affected persons via mail of the errors and the need to establish continued eligibility;
3. Deploy federal inspectors and systems experts to ODJFS to ensure prompt resolution of these errors and to determine the full extent and scope of other possible systemic problems.

I ask for your immediate attention to these matters. Lives literally hang in the balance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis J. Kucinich". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress