



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

August 1, 2012

Marilyn Tavenner, Acting Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert Humphrey Building
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Ms. Tavenner,

I applaud the work already undertaken by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid to crack down on Medicare fraud in conjunction with the DOJ. This important work has already saved taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. My specific inquiry today relates to stopping Medicare payments to operators of suspected illegal "pill mills."

As you may be aware, my home state of Florida has been the epicenter of the pill mill crisis nationwide, with the vast majority of doctors who illegally sell prescription drugs in Florida pill mills. The state has taken an active approach to stopping pill mills, with a dedicated task force supplementing traditional law enforcement action. Florida's actions have significantly cleaned up the pill mill industry, but there are undoubtedly still many doctors and clinics acting illegally.

Pill mills pose an additional threat when they bill Medicare and Medicaid for the drugs being fraudulently prescribed, thus sticking taxpayers with the bill for their crimes. I have read news accounts of pill mills caught after having billed CMS for illegal prescription drugs for years. In this fiscal environment, I am sure that you agree we must all do whatever we can to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars and to do everything to stamp out fraud such as this.

It is my understanding that current law permits CMS to suspend payments to those providers suspected of fraud and more particularly that operators of suspected "pill mills" who seek Medicaid payments. I have been informed that this provision of law has been utilized in instances of suspected pill mills, but I would appreciate if you could provide more information about cases where payments have been suspended. I would also appreciate hearing your thoughts on what obstacles, if any, do the CMS/ OIG investigators face when attempting to suspend Medicare payments to these operators.

My hope is that we can work together to ensure that investigators and law enforcement are fully able to utilize any tools to combat Medicare fraud generally and pill mill fraud specifically to their greatest effectiveness to protect taxpayer dollars.

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I thank you for your commitment and service, and I look forward to a continuing this important discussion with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ted Deutch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ted Deutch
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Cc: Maria Martino, Director of Congressional Affairs, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services