



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

Barbara B. Kennelly, Chair

January 25, 2006

Via Fax

Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin
U.S. House of Representatives
2207 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Cardin:

The undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) are writing to thank you for the introduction of legislation to remove the exclusion of benzodiazepines from coverage under the Medicare drug benefit program that will begin on January 1, 2006. We support your efforts to ensure that this important class of medications will be available to Medicare beneficiaries.

Benzodiazepines are commonly used for management of acute anxiety, panic attacks, seizure disorders, and muscle spasms in those with cerebral palsy or other disorders. The lack of coverage for these medications under Medicare Part D would be especially problematic for individuals with both Medicaid and Medicare coverage, since many may not have the ability to pay for needed medications out of pocket. Approximately 20% of these dual eligible individuals are currently taking one of these medications.

We appreciate your leadership on this issue of critical importance to the most vulnerable of Medicare beneficiaries.

Sincerely,

*AFL-CIO
AFSCME Retiree Program
Alliance for Retired Americans
Alzheimer's Association
American Association for International Aging
American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
American Federation of Teachers Program on Retirement & Retirees
American Geriatrics Society
American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
American Society on Aging
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Families USA
Military Officers Association of America
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
National Association of Social Workers
National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare*

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*National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.
National Senior Citizens Law Center
OWL, The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
United Jewish Communities*