

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL
of
AGING ORGANIZATIONS

Barbara B. Kennelly, Chair

Letter to the Senate re: Medicaid cuts

April 7, 2005

U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

The undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) write to express our deep thanks for your outstanding vote of March 17, 2005, in support of the Smith-Bingaman bipartisan amendment to strike Medicaid cuts from the fiscal year 2006 Senate Budget Resolution. Given the very difficult budget situation we face, this was a courageous vote.

The successful vote on this amendment shows that the Senate recognizes the terrible harm that Medicaid cuts would cause America's most vulnerable citizens, especially the elderly, those in nursing homes and other institutions, and those with disabilities. For those with Alzheimer's disease and other serious illnesses, Medicaid is a lifeline. For those of us who work for better quality of care in nursing homes and elsewhere, adequate Medicaid payment rates are key. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the Budget Committee's original Budget Resolution made federal Medicaid cuts about twice as large as those proposed by the President. Those cuts or those proposed by the President would have caused massive disruption to state budgets and forced the states to undertake a new round of reductions in beneficiary eligibility and services, and cuts in payments to hospitals, doctors, and nursing homes.

We look forward to working with you in the weeks ahead to ensure that the final Budget Resolution does not contain Medicaid cuts or caps and that the Bipartisan Commission proposed by the amendment provides a fair and balanced review of this vital safety net program.

Thank you again for your strong stand on behalf of health care for the most vulnerable in our society, including over five million low-income elderly.

Sincerely,

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 and Retirees
American Geriatrics Society
American Society on Aging
Association of Jewish Aging Services of North America
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Families USA
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Association for Home Care and Hospice
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
National Association of Retired Federal Employees
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Units on Aging
National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council on the Aging
National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.
National Osteoporosis Foundation
National Senior Citizens Law Center
OWL, the voice of midlife and older women
Service Employees International Union Retired Members Program
United Jewish Communities
Volunteers of America