



Debra B. Whitman, Chair

July 22, 2014

United State Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

The Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) is a 69-member coalition of national nonprofit organizations concerned with the well-being of America's older adults and committed to representing their interests in the policymaking arena. We write today to express our strong support for the Medicare Protection Act (S. 2491), and we urge you to vote for this important legislation.

Since 1965, Medicare has ensured access to guaranteed health care benefits for older adults and people with disabilities. Alongside Social Security and Medicaid, Medicare is an essential building block of the health and economic security of our nation's retirees and people with disabilities.

Current Senate budget rules protect Social Security under the process known as reconciliation. S. 2491 would extend these same protections to Medicare benefits—requiring 60 votes to eliminate, reduce or restrict eligibility for Medicare benefits. At the same time, S. 2491 expresses that the Medicare age of eligibility should not be increased, and that the Medicare program should not be privatized or turned into a voucher program.

We believe these protections are warranted given that most people with Medicare live on modest incomes, and already contribute a significant share of their limited incomes to health care costs. In 2013, half of all Medicare beneficiaries—25 million seniors and people with disabilities—lived on annual incomes of \$23,500 or less. On average, Medicare households spend about 15% of their income on health care costs, three times that of non-Medicare households.

Fast track budget reconciliation procedures should not be used to diminish the value of earned Medicare benefits, or to worsen the already tenuous economic circumstances facing many people with Medicare. We believe that budget rules should protect programs fundamental to advancing the health and economic needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and their families. In closing, we urge you to pass the Medicare Protection Act (S. 2491).

Sincerely,

AFL-CIO
AFSCME Retirees

AFT Retirees
Alliance for Retired Americans
American Society on Aging
Association for Gerontology and Human Development in Historically Black Colleges and Universities
Association of Jewish Aging Services
B'nai B'rith International
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.
Gray Panthers
LeadingAge
Medicare Rights Center
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Adult Day Services Association
National Association for Hispanic Elderly
National Association for Home Care & Hospice
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Senior Citizens Law Center
OWL-The Voice of Women 40+
PHI – Quality Care through Quality Jobs
Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders
The International Association for Indigenous Aging
The Jewish Federations of North America
The Military Officers Association of America
The National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
The National Hispanic Council on Aging