



February 20, 2013

Representative Tom Latham  
2217 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Latham,

I am writing on behalf of the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers (NAPGCM). With over 2,000 members, the NAPGCM is dedicated to the advancement of professional geriatric care management through education, collaboration, and leadership. A Geriatric Care Manager is a health and human services specialist who helps guide families who are caring for older relatives.

We again support the Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act. This bill counts *all* time in the hospital toward meeting the three-day qualifying hospital stay. As you know, patients in observation status receive medical and nursing services, tests, medications, and food and they are often intermingled with inpatients. The care is indistinguishable from the care received by inpatients. Although Medicare rules limit observation to, at most, 24-48 hours, many older people and people with disabilities nationwide are experiencing much longer stays in acute care hospitals under observation.

Since the Medicare statute requires that patients have at least three consecutive days of inpatient status (not counting the date of discharge) in order to qualify for Medicare-covered care in a skilled nursing facility (SNF), a major consequence for beneficiaries of not being classified as inpatients is that their subsequent stays in SNFs are not covered by Medicare. In addition, the prescription drugs that patients take while in the hospital in observation status are not paid for, as they would be if the beneficiaries were inpatients.

The current approach imposes great financial burden on Medicare beneficiaries. Often, beneficiaries are unaware of the costs and barriers imposed by a classification as "observation status" until they are required to pay the full costs of a skilled nursing facility stay.

We look forward to working with you to resolve this issue and applaud your leadership. If you should have questions or comments, please contact Susan Emmer at 301.320.3873.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jullie Gray".

Jullie Gray, MSW, LICSW, CPG, CMC  
President