



Seniors And People With Disabilities May Pay Steeper Price For Medical Equipment

(NAPSA)—Seniors and people with disabilities who rely on home medical equipment and services will pay a steep price under Medicare's controversial and mislabeled "competitive" bidding program for durable medical equipment.

Currently, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' use of competitive bidding to set reimbursement prices for durable medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics and supplies is inefficient. It involves what the Southern Economic Journal called "overly complex rules for choosing winners and setting prices [that] distort the incentives that bidders face and may actually result in increased prices for some consumers."

Unintended consequences of the bidding program can include:

- Reduced access to care and service disruption—The bidding program restricts choices for home medical items and services, and it may trigger a race to the bottom in terms of quality.

- Higher spending by Medicare—The bidding process can lead to longer, more expensive hospital stays and more physician office visits, nursing home admissions and emergency room visits.

- Less competition—The bid program can reduce the number of competitors.

- Loss of jobs and small businesses—The program can result in thousands of small businesses closing and result in as many as 100,000 job losses nationwide.

Fortunately, there's an alternative. A bipartisan group of more



The home is the most cost-effective setting for post-acute care of the elderly and disabled.

than 250 lawmakers in the U.S. House of Representatives supports legislation that would repeal the bidding program and replace it with a fiscally responsible measure to reduce payment rates for home care while preserving the ability of home medical equipment providers to continue serving Medicare beneficiaries.

As more people receive medical equipment and services at home, the U.S. will reduce expensive hospital stays, emergency room visits and nursing home admissions. In fact, home medical equipment is an important part of the solution to the nation's health care-funding crisis.

Many people concerned about the health of America are writing to their legislators about this issue at www.house.gov and www.capwiz.com/aahomecare.

For more information, you can visit www.aahomecare.org/competitivebidding.