



September 9, 2004

Dear Member of Congress:

We understand that an amendment by Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-CO) may be offered to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2005 appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (Labor/HHS) that would bar the use of funds to implement Section 1011 of the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA). The undersigned organizations, representing America's hospitals and health systems, health care providers, and safety net systems, urge you to oppose this amendment.

Section 1011 of the MMA provides \$250 million per year for each of FYs 2005 through 2008, to hospitals, physicians, and ambulance services, to help these providers with the uncompensated costs incurred in providing emergency care to undocumented immigrants. After months of careful deliberation by the Medicare conferees, the Congress and the Administration included these essential resources for hospitals providing life saving emergency care to undocumented immigrants.

Hospitals provide care to anyone who walks through their doors – regardless of race, ethnicity, citizenship status, or ability to pay – 24 hours each day, seven days a week. That is the role of community hospitals.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (now the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services) has estimated that more than 275,000 undocumented immigrants enter into the U.S. each year. Some of these individuals incur injuries while crossing the border or come to a hospital emergency room with life-threatening conditions. Federal law mandates that hospitals and emergency medical personnel treat anyone who needs emergency care, including undocumented immigrants. But the federal government only pays for the care of illegal immigrants who are in the custody of Immigration Services or other authorized federal agents. Those individuals make up only a small portion of the illegal immigrants who receive emergency care at our nation's hospitals. Most illegal immigrants are not in legal custody, and hospitals must bear the costs of caring for these people. The costs of providing services to illegal immigrants impose an increasing financial burden on our hospitals.

The problem is not confined only to hospitals serving our border states. Many hospitals across the nation have reported significant costs associated with providing health care services to undocumented immigrants. That is why Section 1011 of the MMA is so important.

The Tancredo amendment would essentially bar the implementation of Section 1011, thus eliminating much-needed hospital resources. We respectfully ask that you oppose this amendment should it come up for a vote.

Sincerely,

American Hospital Association
Association of American Medical Colleges
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Federation of American Hospitals
National Association of Children's Hospitals
National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems
Premier, Inc.
VHA Inc.