

TENNESSEE LEADERS REQUEST SENATOR FRIST'S HELP FOR OUR LOW INCOME SENIORS

Dear Senator Frist,

We represent thousands of seniors in Tennessee who are eligible for nursing home care but choose to stay at home in the community with friends and relatives. Many of these people are lower income, disenfranchised constituents who have difficulty sticking up for themselves.

Right now, the House version of the Medicare Bill now in conference includes language requiring a co-payment for Medicare home health services. Congress eliminated a very similar co-payment in 1972 for the explicit reason of encouraging use of less costly, noninstitutional services.

This Congress is now on the verge of reversing that achievement and increasing the use of more costly institutional care. This is already happening due to the changes that Congress has made to Medicare home health care over the past six years.

Furthermore, this regressive "sick tax" would fall on the home health users with the highest Medicare expenses and the worst health status, patients who have chosen to use home health in lieu of more expensive nursing facility stays.

If this copay becomes law again, hundreds of thousands of Medicare beneficiaries could go further into debt and be forced to choose whether to pay for food, air conditioning, prescription drugs, or for their home health care.

Please stand up for these disenfranchised patients and their families **who already pay substantial out-of-pocket costs for their home health services, including a physician copay and deductible for the referral to home health care, and expenses for a personal assistant to help with bathing and other activities of daily living if the person lives alone.** Stop this regressive "sick tax" that will fall most heavily on Medicare's oldest and most vulnerable beneficiaries.

**Gloria J. Sweet-Love
State President
NAACP
Jackson, TN
9,000+ members**

**Bernie Bowman
President/CEO
Asbury, Inc. Methodist Retirement
Homes
Maryville, TN
850 retirees**

**John M. Cassidy
President
AARP Bradley County
Chapter #3412
Cleveland, TN**

**Thomas Starling, Ed.D
Regional Director
Alzheimer's Association
Mid South Chapter
Nashville, TN
300,000 with A.D. & Caregivers**

Carol Westlake
Executive Director
Tennessee Disability Coalition
Nashville, TN
45 agencies

Monroe Woods
President
Bolivar-Hardeman County Branch,
NAACP
Bolivar, TN
400 members

Melanie A. Davis
Executive Director
Association of Retarded Citizens of
Anderson County
Oak Ridge, TN

Nancy S. Britcher, MSW, LCSW
Director
Jewish Family Services
Knoxville, TN
275 families

Madelyne Daneman
Adult Services Director
Memphis Jewish Community Center
Memphis, TN
2,300 families

Merry Johnson
Orientation & Mobility Specialist
Vital Center for the Blind
Chattanooga, TN

Sheila A. Kernan
Program Coordinator
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Memphis, TN
166 patients

Colette Killebrew
Administrator
Memorial Hospital Home Health
Chattanooga, TN

Anne A. Patterson
Executive Director
Appalachia Habitat for Humanity
Robbins, TN

Sandra Wilson
Director
Retired and Senior Volunteer Program
and Foster Grandparent Program
Cookeville, TN
635 members

Phyllis Y. Nichols
President & CEO
Knoxville Area Urban League
Knoxville, TN