



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR RESPIRATORY CARE  
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March 30, 2011

The Honorable Jason Altmire  
U.S. House of Representatives  
332 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Altmire:

The American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) is a professional association representing over 50,000 respiratory therapists nationwide. As an organization concerned about patient access and quality of care, we support the Fairness in Medicare Bidding Act, HR 1041, to repeal the Medicare competitive bidding program for certain durable medical equipment and prosthetics, orthotics, and supplies, including oxygen and oxygen equipment.

Respiratory therapists provide clinical care and services to pulmonary patients across the continuum of care. While the majority of respiratory therapists work in the hospital setting, an increasing number are employed in alternative care sites such as nursing homes, physician offices, rehabilitation facilities and home care companies.

Oxygen and the equipment that delivers this life sustaining modality is a clinical therapy intervention with individual patient nuances and specifications and therefore should not be subject to a reimbursement policy that views it as a "commodity" or a "product" subject to the lowest bid price.

With the implementation of competitive bidding in January 2011 and the planned expansion to 90 metropolitan areas, the AARC is concerned that the program will have a negative impact on the pulmonary patient's ambulatory care. As oxygen devices and methods of delivering home oxygen continue to evolve, we believe continuation of the current competitive bid program will stifle innovation to new technologies. Further, we are concerned that the current program has the potential to limit access to medically appropriate oxygen equipment for those Medicare beneficiaries who need it.

We appreciate the opportunity to support this important legislation. Please feel free to share this letter of support with the co-sponsors of HR 1041 and those members of Congress who have yet to become supporters of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen J. Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karen J. Stewart, MSc, RRT, FAARC  
President