

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association, the national leadership organization of more than 2,000 Catholic health care sponsors, systems, hospitals, facilities, and related organizations, I would like to express our support for the Medicare Long-Term Care Hospital Patient Safety and Improvement Act of 2007 (H.R. 3057/S. 1958).

The Catholic health ministry advocates public policies that promote a high quality, accessible, and affordable continuum of care to address the needs of those with chronic conditions and illnesses requiring long-term and continuing care. Long-term care hospitals (LTCH) are an important part of that continuum, providing services to medically-complex patients whose average length of stay is 25 days or greater. Policymakers have called for new LTCH patient and facility criteria to ensure that the right patients are being treated in these facilities. However, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has promulgated payment regulations that arbitrarily limit patient access to LTCH services and threaten the ability of these facilities to continue caring for Medicare beneficiaries and other patients.

The Medicare Long-Term Care Hospital Patient Safety and Improvement Act would impose a four-year moratorium on new LTCHs, new LTCH beds and satellite facilities, excepting those currently under development. This legislation also would preclude the extension of the "25% rule" to freestanding LTCHs previously grandfathered from rules restricting co-location of hospitals, and would freeze the threshold at 50% for LTCHS in urban areas co-located with other hospitals as well as reset the threshold for LTCHs in rural areas at 75%. The bill addresses concerns about LTCH growth, defines the appropriate role for these facilities, and maintains access to care for vulnerable Medicare beneficiaries, and we urge your support for this bipartisan legislation.

If I can be of any further assistance on this issue please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Carol Keehan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO