



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

October 9, 2015

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mark Warner
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Isakson and Warner,

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,200 Catholic health care systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, sponsors, and related organizations, I am writing to express our support for your bipartisan legislation, S. 1549, entitled The Care Planning Act of 2015.

In today's health care system, persons facing serious illness or approaching the end of life often do not receive compassionate, coordinated, patient and family-centered care based on their needs or wishes. Instead, too many people are forced to navigate a complex and fragmented health care delivery system with little information or support to make informed decisions. This often results in patients receiving care that they often do not want or need, and that diminishes their quality of life and places significant emotional and financial burdens on their families.

Compassionate care to all persons, especially to those who face serious illness, who are in pain or who are dying, is a hallmark of Catholic health care. We are following the example of Jesus when we care for people who are in great need. Over the past 20 years, Catholic health care has worked to establish palliative care programs—specialized care for people with serious illnesses—in our hospitals and long-term care facilities without receiving direct reimbursement for these services. Our palliative care services, delivered by interdisciplinary teams, are focused on providing patients with relief from the symptoms, pain and stress of a serious illness - whatever the diagnosis - with the goal of improving quality of life for both the patient and the family. This is achieved through care planning based on open, honest communication about severity of illness and medical treatment options; effective pain and symptom control; and highly coordinated care that addresses the physical, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of dealing with serious illness.

Your legislation would help ensure that Medicare patients facing serious or life-threatening illness have access to care planning and coordination of services to ensure patients receive the care they want and need. It also provides funding to support the development of a public information campaign to encourage effective care planning and test new models of care for those with advanced illnesses.



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As our country looks for ways to improve health care quality for persons with serious illness, we believe that improving access to patient-centered and coordinated care planning will help us reach this goal, and your legislation is an essential piece to move us in that direction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sr. Carol Keehan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO