

 American Association
of Colleges of Nursing

June 30, 2009

The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
U.S. House of Representatives
2267 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Blumenauer:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), I would like to thank you for introducing the *Medicare Transitional Care Act of 2009* (H.R. 2773). As the national voice of baccalaureate and graduate nursing education, AACN represents over 640 nursing schools that currently enroll approximately 270,000 students, and employ over 13,000 nurse faculty and researchers. The structure for this program is based on research conducted at the University of Pennsylvania, an AACN member institution. We value your commitment to implementing an evidence-based transitional care model that is proven to benefit the patient while producing cost savings through reducing Medicare patient rehospitalization.

Medicare claims data shows that more than one third of beneficiaries discharged from the hospital are rehospitalized within 90 days—a great expense to the health of these patients as well as Medicare. H.R. 2773 would establish a program that calls specifically on nurses or other qualified health professionals to provide transitional care services for Medicare patients upon discharge from the hospital. This support would include a comprehensive pre-discharge consultation with the patient and caregiver, the collaborative development of an evidence-based plan for transitional care, a mandatory home visit 24 hours after discharge, coordination of services, and accompaniment on follow-up physician visits. Your bill would reduce costly rehospitalizations by ensuring patients and caregivers are informed by and have the assistance of a nurse or other health care professional to navigate the complex treatment needs of those most at risk for rehospitalization.

During the initial implementation of this program, these transitional services will be offered to the highest-risk populations first—a critical step to support the more than 20 percent of older Americans suffering from five or more chronic conditions. Additionally, offering this benefit with no cost-sharing or deductible to the patient will ensure that all Medicare beneficiaries—many of whom are on fixed incomes—will be able to afford this care. Finally, we commend your efforts to include provisions to allow for the collection and dissemination of best practices data for the transitional care community.

AACN applauds this legislation, which capitalizes on existing nursing research to develop a program to address the needs of older patients as they transition from hospital-based care into other care settings. Furthermore, we appreciate the committee's acknowledgement that nurses are well-suited to deliver this type of coordinated transitional care. Please feel free to have a member of your staff contact Chandra Burnside, Manager of Government Affairs, at cburnside@aacn.nche.edu or 202-463-6930 if AACN can be of any service.

Sincerely,



Fay Raines, PhD, RN
President

ADVANCING HIGHER EDUCATION IN NURSING

One Dupont Circle NW, Suite 530 · Washington, DC 20036 · 202-463-6930 *tel* · 202-785-8320 *fax* ·
www.aacn.nche.edu