

## Home Oxygen Care Leaders Applaud U.S. Senate for Passing Medicare Bill to Improve and Protect Home

by PR-Newswire

WASHINGTON, July 10 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Council for Quality Respiratory Care (CQRC), an alliance of the nation's 11 leading home oxygen therapy providers and manufacturers representing nearly one half of Medicare's home oxygen beneficiaries, today praised the Senate for passing the House's Medicare package (HR. 6331), which protects Medicare's home oxygen benefit for more than one million beneficiaries. The bill, also passed in the House as the Medicare Improvements of Patients and Providers Act, repeals a requirement for beneficiaries to take ownership of their oxygen therapy devices after 36 months. This requirement, originally enacted by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA), would have put patients and their families at risk by creating serious safety hazards. Oxygen is a medically-prescribed drug subject to strict regulation by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and can be dangerous if not stored, administered or used properly.

A transfer of ownership to the patient would have required patients to manage the servicing and maintenance of their own equipment. Due to the fragile condition of many home oxygen therapy patients, requiring them to be solely responsible for the proper maintenance of their equipment is an unnecessary risk. Suppliers would no longer be able to ensure home oxygen therapy devices are being stored and cared for properly, jeopardizing patients' ability to benefit from the therapy as prescribed.

"We thank the Senate for passing this much needed legislation, which protects Medicare's home oxygen therapy benefit," said Peter Kelly, chairman of the CQRC. "By voting to pass this legislation, the Senate recognizes the dangers associated with requiring vulnerable patients to take ownership of their equipment and corrects this flawed policy. As providers of home oxygen therapy and services to nearly half of all Medicare home oxygen beneficiaries, we applaud the Senate for their leadership in protecting the 1.4 million Americans who depend on home oxygen therapy for their independence and quality of life."

Home oxygen therapy is both beneficial for patient health and is cost-effective. This treatment costs the Medicare program \$7.62 per day versus as much as \$4,600 per day in the hospital. In 2002, there were 673,000 hospitalizations for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) with an average length of stay of 5.2 days. A government study by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality shows that long-term use of home oxygen therapy reduces hospitalizations and, when hospitalizations do occur, reduces the length of the hospital stay.

"Improving the current benefit will allow home oxygen therapy providers to continue to supply services that not only help patients lead healthier lives, but also save taxpayer dollars," Kelly added. "Home oxygen therapy keeps patients out of the more expensive hospital setting and allows them to remain at home with their families."

The Council for Quality Respiratory Care is a group of the nation's leading home oxygen therapy providers and manufacturers, representing a majority of the more than one million Medicare patients who depend on the home oxygen benefit for their care in order to live in an independent environment. CQRC members include AirSep Corporation, American HomePatient, Apria Healthcare, Invacare, Lincare, Pacific Pulmonary Services, Praxair, Inc., ResMed, Inc., Respirationics, Inc., Rotech Healthcare Inc. and Sunrise Medical, Inc.

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Source: Council for Quality Respiratory Care

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