Help Improve Medicare for Beneficiaries
Ask Your Senators to Support an Amendment to Doc Fix Bill

n4a has been working closely for months with a key group of other aging organizations to ensure that legislation to permanently fix the long-standing problem of how Medicare pays doctors (i.e., the Sustainable Growth Rate, or SGR, which requires frequent patching by Congress) also contains improvements for low-income Medicare beneficiaries.

Last month, the House passed such a bill to permanently fix the SGR, and the Senate is poised to take it up in the next day or so. This is good news for people with Medicare, who need to know their doctors will be there when they need them. But, the bill could be better. The deal has people with Medicare shouldering more than their fair share of the cost. To pay for fixing this broken payment system, the bill increases the cost of premiums and deductibles for some beneficiaries.

The Senate has a chance to make the bill better for seniors and people with disabilities, however, by amending the House bill before passing it this week. Here are some ways the Senate can make the House SGR bill a better deal for seniors:

- Eliminate arbitrary restrictions on access to needed physical, occupational and speech therapies by permanently repealing the “therapy caps”;
- Strengthen protections and outreach for low-income beneficiaries by expanding eligibility for the Qualifying Individual (QI) program that helps low-income seniors afford their Medicare Part B premiums, and by making funding for low-income outreach and enrollment assistance (MIPPA) permanent; and
- Extend expiring funding for Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) that help consumers plan for and navigate long-term services and supports options.

Action Needed:

STEP 1: Call your Senators TODAY to urge them to support an amendment to the SGR bill that improves the bill for Medicare beneficiaries. Call 202.224.3121 to reach the Capitol Switchboard.

STEP 2: Identify yourself and your agency so they understand you are a champion for older adults and other Medicare beneficiaries in your community.
Tell them you are calling to urge the Senator to support an amendment to the SGR (or Medicare “doc fix”) bill that would:

- extend expiring federal funding for Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) at $10 million a year;
- make funding permanent to help beneficiaries enroll in low-income assistance programs (MIPPA);
- expand access to low-income protections for seniors with annual incomes up to $18,000; and
- eliminate arbitrary caps on access to needed physical, occupational and speech therapies.

Then share a few powerful sentences or statistics on how ADRC or MIPPA federal funding allows your agency to support the independence and health of their constituents.

(You can also provide a longer version of your pitch by using the email forms on the Member’s website, but in the interest of time, we are urging calls be your first step.)

Act now! The Senate will decide whether to accept amendments by tonight and could begin voting tomorrow.

If you have questions about this Advocacy Alert, please contact n4a’s policy team: Amy Gotwals and Autumn Campbell, 202.872.0888.