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NHIA Endorses Legislation to Give Medicare Beneficiaries Access to Home Infusion Therapy

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The National Home Infusion Association (NHIA) today hailed the introduction of H.R. 2567, "The Medicare Home Infusion Therapy Coverage Act of 2007." This legislation—introduced by Representatives Eliot Engel (D-NY), Kay Granger (R-TX), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Chip Pickering (R-MS), Randy Kuhl (R-NY) and John Tierney (D-MA) — would close a glaring and unintended gap in Medicare drug coverage that is affecting the sickest, most vulnerable patients.

Medicare patients with cancer, serious infections, congestive heart failure and other life-threatening ailments often require specialized medications that are delivered intravenously. Decades ago, this type of treatment could only be delivered in hospitals. But years of private sector experience demonstrate that the best results can be achieved for the patient if the medications are provided in the home, where the patient prefers to be and where the risk of infection is much lower. Unfortunately, Medicare beneficiaries are being denied access to home infusion therapy simply because Part D will not pay for the professional services, equipment and supplies necessary to safely administer the treatment in the home. The result is that Medicare beneficiaries are being forced back into hospitals and nursing homes for treatment at greater cost to the program and significant inconvenience to the patients and their families.

"Medicare is virtually the only payer in the country where home infusion therapy is not adequately covered," stated Rep. Engel. "Our seniors deserve better. Medicare will not be able to deliver on its promise of quality care as long as home infusion therapy remains inaccessible. I intend to fight to secure passage of this bill so that Medicare beneficiaries receive the same level of care given to individuals with private insurance," vowed Engel.

"Medicare patients should be able to concentrate on fighting their diseases instead of the Medicare bureaucracy," said Rep. Granger. "Our bill would cover home infusion supplies, equipment, and professional services under Part B, thereby making the Part D coverage of infusion drugs meaningful and effective."

"We are delighted about the bill’s introduction and the sponsors’ commitment to making certain that Medicare patients receive the quality care they deserve in the setting they prefer," stated NHIA Executive Director Russ Bodoff. "We also appreciate the strong support for this bill by the Infectious Diseases Society of America and the coalition that has formed of infusion pharmacists, nurses, physicians and manufacturers who are working to ensure that their patients receive the best care possible.”

About NHIA
The National Home Infusion Association, based in Alexandria, Virginia, is a trade association that represents and advances the interests of organizations and individuals that provide infusion and specialized pharmacy products and services to the entire spectrum of homebased patients. For more information, call Russ Bodoff at 703-549-3740 or visit the association at www.nhia.org.