



## Medicare Patients Losing Access to Quality Home Medical Equipment & Services in Rural America

***Take Action to Stop Medicare's Attack on Access to Home Medical Equipment!***

### Overview

Millions of seniors and people with disabilities rely on medical equipment to live safely in their homes. Unfortunately, government policies have created many burdens for these individuals trying to receive medically necessary equipment, services, and supplies. A controversial, new program is sweeping the nation, detrimentally affecting Medicare patients who rely on Home Medical Equipment such as oxygen therapy, wheelchairs, and walkers. **Tell your elected officials that you need their help protecting access to your Home Medical Equipment by passing legislative relief!**

### Urban Auction Program for Rural America?

Starting in 2011, an auction program called "Competitive Bidding" was implemented in the largest metropolitan areas of the country where companies submitted bids to win one of the few, exclusive contracts to provide home medical equipment to Medicare beneficiaries. The concept was that by offering the opportunity for increased market-share and decreased competition, the contracted companies would be able to adjust to the severe price reductions for providing medical equipment, supplies, and services.

The program drew widespread criticism by numerous patient advocacy groups, homecare stakeholders, economists, and auction experts for its design flaws that awarded contracts to those with the cheapest prices and little regard to quality, service, experience, financial health, or presence in the community. Many Medicare patients and family caregivers reported delays in getting needed equipment and services, difficulties in finding companies to perform repairs, and receiving inferior products that the program pricing can barely afford.

In January 2016, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) began a 6-month, 2-part phase in expansion of applying these extreme prices derived from densely populated metropolitan areas like Chicago and

Miami into rural and non-urban America, even though these areas never participated in an auction process.

Failing to factor the unique costs of accessing and caring for medically fragile Medicare patients across rural America, CMS slashed reimbursement rates for medical equipment across rural America by upwards of 50-80% on July 1st.

### Impact on Medicare Beneficiaries in Rural America

For seniors and individuals with disabilities and chronic conditions in less-populated areas, home medical equipment providers can play a major role in limiting hospitalizations, nursing home stays, and other clinical interventions.

However, these irrational, unsustainable prices don't take into account the additional costs of accessing and serving this rural patient population.

**Without adequate funding to cover these costs, trusted home medical equipment companies in these areas are forced to change their delivery and service policies, reduce their product offerings, or shut their business entirely, leaving patients and caregivers in rural areas to ultimately suffer the consequences.**

Additional info available at [www.PeopleForQualityCare.org](http://www.PeopleForQualityCare.org)

## **We Need Your Help Now!**

The next few weeks are critical to getting legislative relief before irrevocable harm occurs. People for Quality Care is helping organize and amplify the voices of beneficiaries, family caregivers, and clinicians to Congress. **Help us sound the alarm for urgent action to preserve access to Home Medical Equipment in rural America by:**

### **1. Contacting Your Member of Congress**

**Send a letter to your elected officials** asking for their help to provide rural relief. As a constituent, your legislators are interested in hearing from you and are elected to represent your needs in Congress. Visit the People for Quality Care Action Center at [www.PeopleForQualityCare.org/TakeAction](http://www.PeopleForQualityCare.org/TakeAction) to send a customizable message to Congress.

### **2. Telling Us Your Story – 800-404-8702**

**Call our Medicare Complaint Hotline** to share your experience. This hotline helps get the voices of those experiencing significant challenges accessing medical equipment to Congress. Your story matters!

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## **About People for Quality Care**

Advocacy groups Save My Medical Supplies and People for Quality Care merged in 2016 to amplify the consumer voice for better homecare. We work to educate and engage consumers who have been detrimentally impacted by poor health care policies to share their message with Congress.

### **Connect with Us:**

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