I am writing to urge you to support of the Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act of 2013 (H.R. 1179 and S. 569).

Medicare beneficiaries' are being denied their necessary healthcare coverage when a stay in an acute care hospital is labeled "outpatient observation" rather than inpatient. This unjust and unfair practice cannot continue – beneficiaries are forced to skip necessary care, or pay out of pocket for services they should be receiving as part of their benefit.

Observation status refers to the increasingly common hospital practice of putting patients in beds and providing them with medical and nursing care, diagnostic tests, treatments, services, food, and a wrist band – but calling them outpatients, not inpatients.

This difference in terminology makes all the difference in the world: Inpatients qualify for Medicare coverage of their nursing home care but outpatients don’t.

Support of the Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act of 2013 and support a full and fair Medicare program for today – and tomorrow.

Yours truly,