

STATE WIDE

New York StateWide Senior Action Council, Inc.
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ACTION AGENDA

Observation Status Needs to Be Addressed by the US Congress

Federal Law – Medicare regulations require a three day inpatient hospital stay prior to admission to a skilled nursing facility or rehab center in order to have Medicare cover care. The hospital must bill through Part A for hospital inpatient care, rather than Part B for observation status in order for the three days to count. Federal legislative can change this regulation to allow observation hospital stays to count toward coverage the same way inpatient days are counted. Pending in Congress, S569/HR1179 will fix this problem.

Action Needed: This bill needs more Congressmembers to co-sponsor it to show their support. If your Representative is listed below, thank them for co-sponsoring the bill and ask them to help move it through the legislative process. If your Congressman is not sponsoring the bill, urge them to do so.

Call: US Senate Switchboard 202-224-3121 and House of Representatives Switchboard 202-224-3121.

Senators Schumer and Gillibrand ARE co-sponsors.

House of Representative NYS members who ARE co-sponsors:

Bishop, Clarke, Crowley, Gibson, Hanna, Higgins, Israel, Maffei, McCarthy, Meng, Nadler, Owens, Slaughter & Tonko

See Reverse for Sample Letter. Write to your Congressman if they are NOT on the list above.

Dear Representative,

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

Medicare beneficiaries are being denied their necessary rehabilitation 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,
