

01/22/2009 Moran, Berry Introduce Health Care Bill

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Legislation Ensures Patient Access to Medical Equipment, Quality Health Care

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressmen Jerry Moran and Marion Berry (AR-01) held a press call today to discuss legislation introduced yesterday that preserves Americans' access to affordable health care supplies. H.R. 616 will ensure community pharmacists are exempt from a Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) accreditation requirement in order to sell Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics and Supplies (DMEPOS).

"It is essential that community pharmacists continue to provide patients with quality health care," Moran said. "Community pharmacists are the only licensed medical professionals subject to this unnecessary and unfair CMS regulation. To guarantee their equal treatment, Congressman Berry and I introduced this legislation which will ensure that pharmacists can continue to provide the equipment and services necessary to keep patients healthy."

"In rural areas, including many small towns across Arkansas, community pharmacists are often the only medical professionals available who can supply this vital equipment to patients," Berry said. "The current law threatens the ability of patients to get the supplies and care they must have to stay healthy. This bill will ensure Medicare patients have access to the supplies they need while also helping community pharmacies keep their doors open."

The Medicare Improvements for Patients and providers Act of 2008 (MIPPA) gave the authority to exempt certain health professionals from the DMEPOS accreditation requirements. The CMS accreditation requirement threatens patient access to important medical products by adding unnecessary bureaucratic costs and prevents many pharmacists from being able to continue to provide vital equipment and supplies to their patients.

Moran and Berry introduced H.R. 616 to add community pharmacists to the list of medical professionals that have been conditionally exempted from the requirement by CMS (i.e. physicians, physical therapists, nurse practitioners, orthotists, prosthetists, opticians, etc.). Currently, community pharmacists are the only licensed medical professionals that must meet new CMS accreditation requirements as Medicare suppliers of DMEPOS. Pharmacies are already licensed and highly regulated by state and federal authorities. This change will preserve patient access to necessary medical supplies and equipment.

The American Pharmacists Association (APhA), Food Marketing Institute (FMI), National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS), National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) and the National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations (NASPA) representing pharmacists, community pharmacies and state pharmacy organizations nationwide support this legislation.

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