

August 12, 2005

The Honorable Charles Grassley
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL: chuck_grassley@grassley.senate.gov

Dear Senator Grassely:

Hospice care is a special kind of care for dying people, their families, and their caregivers. Hospice patients receive the right care at the right time because hospice provides care in a variety of settings including the patient's home, a nursing home, or a hospice inpatient facility. Hospice care enables the patient to maintain quality of life during the end-of-life, addressing not only the physical needs of the patient through palliative care but also the psychological and spiritual needs of the patient and the patient's family. It's because of this unique blend of services and the focus on both the patient and family that a growing number of Iowans are choosing hospice for end-of-life care.

Hospices are reimbursed on a per diem rate which includes care provided by physicians, nurses, home health aides, social workers, and volunteers. Included in that same per-diem rate, hospices provide prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, medical supplies, home medical equipment, and other types of therapy as called for in the patient's individualized plan of care. Hospice care is also unique because it treats the patient's family as well, providing bereavement care for the patient's loved ones for at least a year after patient's death. Medicare reimbursement for most hospice care is provided at less than \$120 per day, the cost of hotel stay in many areas of the state.

I firmly believe that hospice care should be available for all people in the state of Iowa who desire it, regardless of age, income, diagnosis, or place of residence. Access to hospice care will be threatened if Congress decides to cut Medicare hospice rates, especially in rural areas. Hospices in Iowa are surviving but not thriving; and a Medicare payment cut would detrimental to many. The cut would also be two-fold because Iowa Medicaid hospice rates are tied to Medicare hospice rates.

I urge you to oppose any payment cuts for the Medicare hospice benefit preserving access to hospice care in Iowa! Please feel free to contact me regarding any questions you may have about hospice care or the Medicare hospice benefit.

Sincerely,

Name
Address
City, State Zip