

Dingell on the "Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008"

Washington, D.C. – Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce delivered the following statement on the House floor today in support of H.R. 6331. This legislation prevents the pending 10 percent payment reduction for physicians in Medicare, enhances Medicare preventive and mental health benefits, improves and extends programs for low-income Medicare beneficiaries, and extends expiring provisions for rural and other providers.

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The legislation before us today is critical to ensuring access to high-quality physician services for Medicare beneficiaries. If we fail to enact this legislation, physicians will face a 10 percent pay cut that jeopardizes access to care for seniors and the disabled.

At the same time, this legislation provides additional protections for low-income beneficiaries and adds benefits to the traditional Medicare program such as coverage for more preventive benefits. The legislation also will make the Medicare drug benefit work better for pharmacists, and thereby seniors.

Finally, this legislation begins to address the most egregious private plans operating in Medicare. Private Fee-For-Service (PFFS) plans, one type of Medicare Advantage (MA) plan, do not have to sign up providers to be a part of their networks. The result is that beneficiaries have no idea which physicians accept payments from their plan and if they don't the beneficiary is left holding the bag. These plans create tremendous uncertainty and confusion for both beneficiaries and providers.

I urge Members to support this legislation.

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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