



March 12, 2015

The Honorable James B. Renacci
United States House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Eliot Engel
United States House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

Dear Congressmen Renacci and Engel:

The National Association of Urban Hospitals is pleased to endorse H.R. 1343, your Establishing Beneficiary Equity in the Hospital Readmission Program Act.

NAUH has long been concerned about the inequities we believe are inherent in Medicare's hospital readmissions reduction program and appreciates your proposal to add a much-needed risk adjustment element to the program. As we have conveyed on numerous occasions to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and to Congress as far back as 2012, we believe the patients private, non-profit urban safety-net hospitals serve are often fundamentally more challenging to treat than the typical hospital patient – challenging because they frequently have had only sporadic access to health care services over long periods of time and have conditions that are therefore more complex to treat and challenging because they often lack the financial resources and community supports needed to facilitate recovery from illnesses and injuries and avoid readmission. Since the program was launched a number of studies, including one by an office within the Department of Health and Human Services, have confirmed this perspective.

We are especially pleased that the bill proposes applying risk adjustment in the cases of patients who are dually eligible both for Medicare and Medicaid and for those who face various and significant socio-economic and other obstacles to gaining access to care and then making the most of the care they have received. These patients are very challenging to serve, urban safety-net hospitals serve far more of them than the typical hospital, and it has come as little surprise to us to see that the majority of urban safety-net hospitals have had penalties assessed to them under this program. For this reason, we also appreciate the provision that requires the program to factor into the program a hospital's non-compliant patients and how they affect hospital readmissions.

H.R. 1343 is a timely proposal to addressing these inequities and would make a major contribution toward improving the effectiveness of Medicare's hospital readmissions reduction program. NAUH enthusiastically supports the bill and thanks you for proposing it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ellen Kugler".

Ellen Kugler, Esq.
Executive Director

