



June 24, 2003

«FullProperName»

«Street»

«CityStateZip»

VIA FAX: «Fax»

Dear Senator «LastName»:

We urge you to support an amendment offered by Senator Jeffords to the Senate Medicare prescription drug bill which will ensure the Medicare program provides comprehensive coverage for all Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved drugs that can be used as smoking cessation aids. As organizations committed to reducing and preventing tobacco-caused disease and death, we feel it is extremely important to include the full range of smoking cessation products in the Senate's Medicare Prescription Drug bill.

The underlying bill (S.1) takes an important step by extending Medicare coverage for smoking cessation aids that are sold as prescription drugs. However, most cessation products are sold as nonprescription drugs and these would not be covered under the current bill. Senator Jeffords' amendment would provide a much needed modification to the underlying bill to ensure that Medicare patients also have access to tobacco cessation products approved by the FDA and marketed as nonprescription products, and it would provide this needed coverage without creating a broad exception for other nonprescription products.

Nearly 11 percent of all Medicare beneficiaries, approximately 4.3 million people, are smokers. Tobacco-caused illnesses cost the Medicare program an estimated \$20 billion every year. If we can help those beneficiaries who want to quit smoking, we could begin to make serious headway at reducing the health and financial toll that tobacco use is exacting upon individual Medicare beneficiaries and on the program as a whole. There are major benefits to quitting at any age. Studies of elderly smokers who have quit have found they have cardiovascular mortality rates the same as non-smokers, that lung function and circulation improve, that heart attack survival rates improve while the risk of heart attack decreases, and life expectancy can be increased by as much as two to three years.

Tobacco cessation, including that provided to seniors, has been demonstrated to be both clinically- and cost-effective. Providing better access to FDA approved cessation products would truly improve health and quality of life and help pay for itself by reducing the costs of treating tobacco-caused disease. Again, we urge you to support the amendment by Senator Jeffords to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries have access to the full range of tobacco cessation products.

Sincerely,

American Cancer Society
American College of Chest Physicians
American Lung Association
American Heart Association
American College of Cardiology
American Psychological Association
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Center for Tobacco Cessation
Oncology Nursing Society