

A Resolution urging the Congress of the United States to permanently eliminate the 15 percent cut in the Medicare home health benefit; urging extension of the 10 percent rural add-on to Medicare home health providers; urging the President to support Congress in these efforts; and directing distribution.

WHEREAS, there are 166 Medicare-certified agencies in Oklahoma providing critical care each year in the homes of nearly half-a-million Oklahomans; and

WHEREAS, many of the home health patients that receive Medicare services are typically the sickest, frailest and most vulnerable group of Oklahoma's senior population; and

WHEREAS, Congress in 1997 sought to cut growth in the Medicare home health benefit by \$16.2 billion over five years but instead their actions resulted in a cut of more than \$72 billion; and

WHEREAS, nearly one million fewer Medicare beneficiaries are qualifying for Medicare-reimbursed home care compared to 1997; and

WHEREAS, additional cuts in the Medicare home health benefit would force many low-cost, efficient Oklahoma agencies that are struggling under the current system to go out of business thereby reducing access to Medicare beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, total elimination of the 15 percent cut has been postponed for the past two years; and

WHEREAS, the impending 15 percent cut makes it difficult for home health agencies in Oklahoma to secure lines of credit and discourages investment in advanced technologies and staff benefits; and

WHEREAS, 65 members of the United States Senate have joined in a bipartisan letter that recommends the elimination of the 15 percent cut; and

WHEREAS, 113 members of the United States House of Representatives have joined in a bipartisan letter that recommends the elimination of the 15 percent cut; and

WHEREAS, the United States Senate Budget Committee has voted to set aside the funds necessary to eliminate the 15 percent cut; and

WHEREAS, MedPAC (Medicare Payment Advisory Commission), the group established by Congress to advise on Medicare policy, has

called upon Congress to permanently eliminate the 15 percent cut in the Medicare home health benefit; and

WHEREAS, MedPAC reported that there are three factors that can lead to an increase in cost for rural home health providers, including travel, volume of services, and the lack of sophisticated management and patient care procedures; and

WHEREAS, Medicare home health services are delivered to a large rural population of Oklahomans who often live miles apart thereby increasing the cost of providing home health services in these areas; and

WHEREAS, home health care is one of the most cost-effective means available for providing long-term care to numerous senior Oklahomans.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE 2ND SESSION OF THE 48TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE:

THAT the Oklahoma House of Representatives urges Congress to permanently eliminate the 15 percent cut in the Medicare home health benefit.

THAT the Oklahoma House of Representatives urges Congress to extend the 10 percent rural add-on for Medicare home health agencies.

THAT the Oklahoma House of Representatives urges the President to support Congress' effort to eliminate the 15 percent cut in the Medicare home health benefit and to extend the 10 percent rural add-on.

THAT copies of this resolution be distributed to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives and to each member of the Oklahoma Congressional Delegation.

Adopted by the House of Representatives the 17th day of May, 2002.

Presiding Officer of the House of
Representatives