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BAUCUS WANTS CAREFUL WATCH ON CALIFORNIA HOSPITAL

CMS tells Finance Chairman that hospital will keep its Medicare status for now

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) said that he will continue to monitor the Medicare status of a California hospital that has had ongoing problems for the past few years and was the site of a recent and troubling patient death. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services said this week that they will allow the Martin Luther King, Jr.-Harbor Hospital in Los Angeles to continue as a Medicare provider for now, but that the hospital must pass a complete survey, including correcting violations of six Conditions of Participation in the Medicare program, or face losing its Medicare provider status on August 15, 2007. The hospital had been designated in “immediate jeopardy” of losing its Medicare provider status at the end of this month, but CMS says sufficient corrective measures have been taken in recent weeks to postpone action for now. Baucus, whose committee has jurisdiction over Medicare and Medicaid, wrote to CMS Acting Administrator Leslie V. Norwalk on June 15 questioning the agency’s handling of the hospital’s status as a Medicare participant.

“I continue to be very concerned about what is going on at MLK-Harbor hospital,” said Baucus. **“CMS’s finding of ongoing violations means that Medicare beneficiaries and others simply may not get the safe, quality care they should be able to expect from any hospital – especially one receiving taxpayer funds. I will continue to work with CMS to ensure Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries receive appropriate and safe care in Los Angeles and across the country.”**

In a letter to Baucus this week, Norwalk outlined the steps CMS has taken thus far to ensure MLK-Harbor’s compliance with Medicare rules. The letter specified that Medicare and Medicaid have paid the facility only for certain emergency services since May 1, 2007. Norwalk also reiterated that the hospital still must pass another CMS survey before August 15th to demonstrate it meets all of Medicare’s requirements.

The text of Acting Administrator Norwalk’s letter to Chairman Baucus can be found on the Finance Committee website by [clicking here](#).

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