



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

NEWS RELEASE

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Baucus Applauds MedPAC Report, Plans to Introduce Legislation Based on Findings

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) U.S. Senator Max Baucus today applauded the report released by the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) and stated that he will be introducing legislation shortly to address some of the findings. Baucus especially highlighted the Commission's recognition that ensuring Medicare beneficiaries' access to high quality health care is an important priority.

In the last few years, the Institute of Medicine has released reports highlighting some of the hurdles in the areas of quality and patient safety that must be overcome. Recently, one study showed that patients receive recommended care only about 50 percent of the time. Another study showed that when patients are injured during hospitalization due to poor quality care, the results are longer hospital stays, more expensive care, and higher risk of mortality. And the National Healthcare Quality Report released by the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality in December 2003 showed that while quality is improving in some areas of our health care system, it is actually worsening in others.

"As a country with one of the most advanced systems of health care in the world, this level of quality is very concerning and unacceptable," Baucus said. "As the largest single purchaser of health care in the nation, Medicare should take a leading role to promote high quality care and I'm pleased that MedPAC agrees. We must work together in Congress to increase quality of health care across the board."

As the MedPAC report explains, Medicare payment policies are currently neutral or even negative towards health care quality. The legislation Baucus will soon introduce will respond to MedPAC's recommendations and will establish quality incentive payment policies for the Medicare managed care program and for outpatient dialysis services. Baucus has specifically focused on these areas because Medicare managed care and dialysis are two areas in which measures of quality have been agreed upon and are regularly collected.

Baucus's legislation will also include more research and demonstration projects to examine ways of measuring and paying for quality that can work for both urban and rural hospital settings.

"I'm eager to move forward to reward and encourage high quality care in the Medicare program -- it's one of the best ways to ensure that patients are getting the care they deserve," Baucus said. "We need more research and demonstration projects to explore what will work for hospitals, but I am proud to start the ball rolling with my proposal for Medicare managed care

and dialysis services. I look forward to moving this proposal through Congress so we can achieve a higher standard of care for all Americans."

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