

...support needed via "Dear Colleague Letter" DEADLINE: Tomorrow, Friday, June 12th at noon

Yesterday, Congressman Kendrick Meek (D-FL) and Mike Ross (D-AR), announced a "Sign On" letter to gain support for new oxygen reform policy. A draft proposal of the letter was first released last week at AAHomecare's Washington Conference and contains the majority of the oxygen reform concept, created by their New Oxygen Coalition (NOC), which I participated in.

While the Board of AMEPA supports the need for legislation to repeal the oxygen cap, we feel that removing the cap, without significant reform will be difficult to achieve.

For too long oxygen providers have been slammed by legislators and CMS officials claiming that we are overpaid, thanks to a biased report from the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). We have been unfairly judged because of one slanted report, which focus solely on the cost of one standard piece of equipment, which in reality is the smallest expense for providers of oxygen therapy. The report never mentions the cost and necessity for portable oxygen systems, other prescribed oxygen modalities and the necessary 24 hour a day services behind the treatment of a patient suffering from respiratory and/or cardiac ailments. In fact the terms: oxygen purity, portable gaseous oxygen, liquid oxygen, home filling oxygen systems and battery operated oxygen systems are not mentioned once in the OIG report.

The reform is intended to remove the 36 month oxygen cap in a budget neutral program, reimbursing providers for actual patient usage, not on one standard piece of equipment.

The following is a statement from Congressman Ross' office:

"Congressmen Ross and other members will be introducing legislation shortly to provide needed reforms and improvements to the Medicare home oxygen benefit. We would like to send the following letter to the committees of jurisdiction overseeing health care reform highlighting details of this proposal and the need for its inclusion in comprehensive health care reform. We hope your boss will be able to join us in supporting this issue."

Written by Rob Brant

[Click here to view the "Sign On Letter"](#)

I encourage all providers to contact your legislators and have your oxygen patients contact them as well and ask that they contact Kate Callanan at Congressman Ross' office to sign on the letter.

Offices that would like to sign on can reach Kate at kate. callanan@mail.house.gov

While speaking with legislative offices last week and yesterday

asking for support of the Meek/Ross letter, I explained the reform in the simplest terms:"This is a budget neutral plan, which will remove the oxygen cap and reimburse providers based on actual patient usage not just on the equipment in their home therefore, it is a win for both patients and the Medicare program."

[Click here to find U.S. Representatives in your area](#) .

Please contact the AMEPA office if you have any questions, comments or suggestions.