

## North Carolina Association for Medical Equipment Services



*Preserving access to quality care*  
**PRESS RELEASE**

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### **NCAMES Supports New Legislation to Fight Medicare Bidding Program**

*Bipartisan House Bill H.R. 1041 Draws Early Support in Congress*

(Charlotte and Raleigh, N.C.) North Carolina's leader in home medical equipment (HME) advocacy and education, NCAMES, recently endorsed H.R. 1041, new legislation introduced March 11 to repeal Medicare's flawed bidding program for HME equipment and services.

The Fairness in Medicare Bidding Act was introduced by Congressmen Glenn Thompson (R-Pa.) and Jason Altmire (D-Pa.) and has already attracted support in the Tar Heel State from Rep. Heath Shuler (D-NC, 11th District) and Rep. Larry Kissell (D-NC, 8th District) who have co-signed the legislation.

In a statement regarding his support for H.R. 1041, Rep. Shuler said, "Helping people maintain their independence and stay in their homes results in a better quality of life and improved health, while also being much more cost effective. I look forward to continuing to work with the durable medical equipment industry to help our seniors and reduce overall healthcare costs."

NCAMES officials were in Washington, D.C. recently to continue their efforts in fighting restrictive new Medicare rules enacted in January of this year. As predicted by the HME industry well in advance of their implementation, these rules are devastating HME providers in Charlotte, costing jobs and threatening local businesses, while denying access to quality care for seniors and other patients in need. Hundreds of economists, care providers, and elected officials have been lobbying the federal government and testifying before the U.S. Congress about the negative effects of this program.

Thirty-five states sent HME business owners, patients, care providers, and other industry representatives to the American Association for Homecare conference in Washington, D.C. the week that H.R. 1041 was introduced. North Carolina's contingent – the second largest in terms of member advocates – were on hand to actively support the new legislation and share their experiences with elected officials like Rep. Shuler.

"The Fairness in Medicare Bidding Act is already gaining steam in the U.S. Senate, which is something previous legislation was unable to secure in the last Congress," NCAMES Executive Director Beth Bowen explained. According to Bowen, the non-controversial way that H.R. 1041 taps into unused federal funds to offset the cost of repealing the program won't harm the industry any further.

"All the testimony before Congress, the hundreds of complaints filed by Medicare beneficiaries, the reports and studies by dozens of economists warning about the damage the HME bidding program is doing right here, right now in places like Charlotte are finally triggering some action with our elected officials," she added.

Patients have been reporting widespread difficulty finding a local equipment or service provider, dangerous delays in obtaining medically required equipment and services, and longer than necessary, expensive hospital stays due to trouble being discharged. HME providers have reported cutbacks in services, staffing layoffs, and sub-industry "suicide bids" caused by the bidding program.

Implemented in nine metropolitan areas throughout the country, including Charlotte, Medicare's bidding pro-

gram will expand to an additional 91 areas across North Carolina and the U.S. later this year. The program dictates which HME businesses may continue to service patients in need of equipment and services such as oxygen therapy, enteral nutrients (tube feeding), continuous positive air pressure (CPAP) and respiratory assistive devices, power wheelchairs, walkers and hospital beds.

In addition to NCAMES, the new legislation has garnered support from the American Association for Homecare, the ALS Association, the International Ventilator Users Network, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the Brain Injury Association of America, National Emphysema and COPD Association, the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, and the National Council on Independent Living, among others.

NCAMES is continuing to actively educate patients, government and business leaders on the devastating effects of Medicare's HME bidding program, in addition to directly lobbying elected officials in the U.S. House and Senate. The organization has launched [YouTube.com/SaveJobsNC](https://www.youtube.com/SaveJobsNC) and is engaged in other educational outreach to inform taxpayers in North Carolina and throughout the country how much the Medicare HME bidding program is costing in terms of money, jobs and innovations in life-sustaining in-home care.

For more details on the restrictive Medicare bidding program and its effects on patients and jobs in North Carolina, visit [www.savejobsnc.com](http://www.savejobsnc.com).

#### *ABOUT NCAMES*

*With close to 300 member companies and growing, the North Carolina Association for Medical Equipment Services (NCAMES) is the statewide leader in preserving access to safe, affordable, and therapeutic home medical equipment. We provide advocacy and education to home medical equipment (HME) providers statewide dedicated to helping North Carolina's growing senior population and patients of all ages gain more mobility and experience a high quality of life in the comfort and privacy of their own homes. Instrumental in passing the nation's first HME licensure law which has been working to ensure quality home health care since 1995, NCAMES continues to advocate for seniors and patients in need. For more information, visit [www.ncames.org](http://www.ncames.org) or call (919) 387-1221.*