VNS Health and Rep. Ritchie Torres Lead Push to Protect Home Health Care Funding

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Policy

VNS Health, Representative Ritchie Torres, and a bipartisan coalition of New York lawmakers led the charge to oppose a proposed federal payment rule that could cut over $1 billion in home health care funding in 2026.

In a letter sent to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the group urged officials to pause the rule change and reexamine their approach to budget neutrality. The proposed adjustments stem from the Balanced Budget Act of 2018, which mandated a budget-neutral transition to the new payment system. CMS claimed that the proposed change "would help improve patient care and protect the Medicare program's sustainability for future generations." However, critics of the change argue that CMS's methodology has resulted in unauthorized rebasing and significant funding reductions. The letter also challenges CMS's methodology which said "the proposed rule threatens the ability of home health care providers to care for our nation's senior citizens, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations"

VNS Health played a key role in shaping the letter, which was first shared by *POLITICO.* In the story, President and CEO Dan Savitt, emphasized the real-world impact of continued Medicare cuts:

"Every day, more and more seniors are being denied essential care because of years of Medicare cuts – especially in 'home health deserts' like the Bronx and upstate rural communities," said Dan. "CMS has the obligation to fix this so seniors can recover safely at home and not end up back in hospitals, nursing homes – or worse."

The letter calls on CMS to apply consistent budget methodology principles across care settings, including skilled nursing facilities, and to ensure that home health care providers are not disproportionately affected.

Broad Congressional Support

The letter was signed by a wide range of New York's congressional delegation, including:

- Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand
- Reps. Yvette Clarke, Adriano Espaillat, Andrew Garbarino, Dan Goldman, Timothy M. Kennedy, Nick LaLota, George Latimer, Mike Lawler, Nicole Malliotakis, John Mannion, Gregory Meeks, Grace Meng, Joseph Morelle, Jerry Nadler, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Josh Riley, Pat Ryan, Tom Suozzi, Claudia Tenney, Paul Tonko, and Nydia Velázquez

What's Next?

VNS Health will continue to advocate for policies that protect access to home health care, especially for underserved communities. The organization cares for over 73,000 individuals on given day making it one of the largest nonprofit home- and community-based health care organizations in the nation. More than 11,000 team members work tirelessly to provide care services to patients, members, and clients which include: home care, hospice care, behavioral health care, private pay/personal care services as well as Health Plans.

As CMS reviews public feedback on the proposed rule, VNS Health remains committed to ensuring that older adults and vulnerable populations receive the care they need.

Representative Ritchie Torres also joined a VNS Health home health care nurse on a Bronx home visit to learn firsthand how vital these services are for New Yorkers. A video on the visit and the impact these cuts have is available on the representative's YouTube channel.

Source: https://www.vnshealth.org/about/newsroom/articles/vns-health-and-rep-ritchie-torres-lead-push-to-protect-home-health-care-funding/

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