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Congressman Joe Courtney Participates in a Discussion About Home Health Care Regulations with Leaders and Primary Care Providers of Community Health Center. Inc.

Middletown, CT (September 14, 2011) – Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC) hosted a round table discussion with Congressman Joe Courtney to voice support for amending the current regulations governing the ordering of Home Health Care services for patients covered by Medicare.

Congressman Courtney, who is a co-sponsor of the HR 2267 bill, was present for a meeting with CHC's clinical teams from around the organization. Courtney – who described himself as an advocate of issues related to nurse practitioner practice – is a strong supporter for amending title XVII of the Social Security Act to remove barriers to access to timely home health care for Medicare enrollees.

While discussing the barriers that are placed on nurse practitioners under the current legislation Dr. Nwando Olayiwola, Chief Medical Officer for CHC, explained "Our nurse practitioners are the primary providers for many elderly patients – they know the patients and know their needs. It is not rational for them to have to go and get an order signed by a physician who may not know the patient at all. It wastes time, resources, and is inconsistent with our patient-centered model."

Under current Social Security Law, only physicians are able to order and certify home health care services. This process requires a physician to repeat the same tasks that have already been performed by the nurse practitioner, an obvious duplication of work and a waste of scarce health care resources.

The amount of time that can lapse between initial diagnosis and the ability to obtain HHC services can mean life or death in certain situations. "One of my patients was discharged from the hospital after a complex surgery that would leave her immobilized for several weeks. She lived on her own and would require in-home care to begin as soon as she returned to her home," explained Anna Olivier, nurse practitioner at CHC. "Luckily for me, I had a physician on site that could co-sign for me that day, but this is not the usual case. A week or more can pass before the orders are signed, and this patient would not have been able to have a successful recovery on her own. By amending this legislation, nurse practitioners, as primary care providers, can provide better access to care for our patients, in a timelier manner."

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According to an analysis by the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, the majority of NP's (65.4%) are primary care providers. This percentage exceeds all other practitioners who furnish primary care services. Allowing nurse practitioners to order their own patient's care services will effectively streamline access to care for thousands of patients throughout the state.

The Congressman encouraged all those present for the discussion to contact their legislators and voice their reasons for amending HR 2267. "This is a bipartisan bill; it's not a budget buster. Hopefully we can make the case that in fact makes the [health care] system more efficient and gives it strength and value," he said.

You can view the full discuss on www.chc1.com, click on "News & Events".

About Community Health Center, Inc.

Since 1972, Community Health Center, Inc. has been one of the leading healthcare providers in the state of Connecticut, building a world-class primary health care system committed to caring for underserved and uninsured populations. CHC is focused on improving health outcomes for its more than 130,000 patients as well as building healthy communities. Currently, CHC delivers service in 218 locations statewide, offering primary care in medical, dental and behavioral health services.

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