



April 19, 2011

The Honorable Earl Blumenauer  
1502 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Blumenauer:

On behalf of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and its more than 30,000 provider and individual members, I am writing in support of H.R. 1589, the Personalize Your Care Act of 2011. While research shows that a large majority of Americans would prefer to die at home, more than seventy-five percent die in hospitals each year<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, additional research shows that when people facing a life-limiting illness have discussions with their physician about end-of-life care preferences, they experience less physical and psychological distress and overall, a better quality of death<sup>2</sup>.

Your proposed legislation recognizes that with appropriate Medicare and Medicaid coverage for voluntary advance care planning consultations, grants for programs in support of Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST), advance care planning standards for electronic health records and portability of advanced directives, the American healthcare system can meet the complex needs of our aging population.

The Personalize Your Care Act would empower patients, decrease the burden on families, and produce end-of-life care outcomes, while increasing care quality and adherence to patient wishes. Enactment of your legislation would mean the realization of many long-time NHPCO goals, especially the provision of coverage for voluntary advance care planning consultation between a patient and their health care practitioner. Discussing advance care planning before a Medicare or Medicaid beneficiary finds him or herself in a medical crisis will help ensure the patient gets the care that he or she wants. One of the most frequent comments from family caregivers that hospice providers hear is “Why didn’t we know about this sooner?” Coverage for advance care planning consultations would ensure patients and family caregivers knew all of their options earlier.

NHPCO commends your leadership on the advancement of end-of-life care planning. We strongly support passage of this important legislation, and look forward to working with you on this and future legislation that meets the need for all Americans to have access to quality end-of-life care.

Sincerely,

J. Donald Schumacher, PsyD  
President/CEO

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.chcr.brown.edu/dying/>

<sup>2</sup> *Archive of Internal Medicine*, March 2009