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House Passes Bipartisan Legislation to Increase Access to Life-Saving Medications

The Medicare IVIG Access Act, authored by Reps. Doris Matsui and Kevin Brady, restores Medicare benefit for primary immune deficiency disease patients

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Today, the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly voted to pass H.R. 1845, the Medicare IVIG Access Act, authored by Representatives Doris Matsui (D-CA) and Kevin Brady (R-TX). This bipartisan legislation will help Medicare beneficiaries with primary immune deficiency diseases (PIDD) receive life-saving medication in their homes. PIDD occurs in persons born with an immune system that is either absent or hampered in its ability to function, making people with these diseases more vulnerable to infection.

Under current law, Medicare beneficiaries with PIDD face access barriers to a lifesaving drug known as intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG). This is due to a gap in Medicare coverage that allows Medicare to pay for the IVIG itself, but not for the equipment or the nursing services needed for patients to receive the IVIG infusions in their homes. The legislation introduced by Representatives Matsui and Brady and passed by the House today fills this hole in Medicare coverage by requiring Medicare to begin paying for the items and services related to the administration of IVIG for immune-deficient patients who need home infusion therapy.

“All Americans should have access to quality, affordable health care,” said Congresswoman Matsui. “Unfortunately, some Medicare beneficiaries with primary immune deficiency do not have access to the lifesaving medication they need in a manner that is most appropriate to their health care needs. Patients with rare genetic diseases should not see their access to care diminish when they become eligible for Medicare, and this bipartisan legislation will restore the lifesaving promise of IVIG for this patient population.”

In addition to the Medicare IVIG Act, H.R. 1845 contained the Strengthening Medicare and Repaying Taxpayers Act, provisions in the legislation that would provide the funding for IVIG by expediting the Medicare claims process. These provisions, authored by Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI), would accelerate the processing of Medicare secondary payer reimbursement from liability and workers' compensation settlements, remove bureaucratic delays at Medicare that can jeopardize seniors' benefits, and collect billions of dollars owed by insurance companies to the Medicare Trust Fund.

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