

September 2, 2008

Chairman Douglas Stratton  
Interim Study Committee on Dialysis Coverage  
C/o Legislative Services Agency  
200 West Washington Street, Suite 301  
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2739

Dear Chairman Stratton:

As America's largest dialysis patient organization, we are proud to represent over 23,000 pre-dialysis and dialysis patients and their families. On a wide variety of issues, we seek to ensure that the patients' point of view is heard and considered by policy makers so that continued progress may be made in the quality of care and life for patients with kidney disease. A critical element of quality of life for patients is access to dialysis care.

There are over 341,000 dialysis patients in American and 6,445 dialysis patients in Indiana. Dialysis is unique in that it is the only chronic illness where insurance providers lose liability for providing payment for their beneficiary's treatment after a limited amount of time. Once a patient with private insurance has been on dialysis for 30 months Medicare becomes the primary payor for most patients regardless of their age or disability status.

Continuity of care and access to dialysis facilities that are close to home are both important to a patient's quality of life and their health. Hemo-dialysis patients typically spend 4 hours at the dialysis clinic, 3 times per week. They form close relationships with their nurses, primary care technicians, social worker, and other members of their care team who provide vital life-sustaining treatment. The 4 hours at the clinic does not take into account the travel time it takes for a patient to get to and from their clinic. Transportation is already a challenge many patients face. Forcing a patient out of a familiar facility and requiring them to commute to a new facility to receive their dialysis is stressful and can be an economic hardship for a patient population that is already very vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Insurance providers should not be risking a patient's health and quality of life by placing them in the middle of payment disputes and telling them they need to switch dialysis clinics. Patients who have paid for the right to choose where they receive their care should have the choice to access a dialysis facility that is convenient to them. A patient's health and quality of life is impeded when restrictions limit the choices patients have to receive treatment. On behalf of our 23,000 members and all dialysis patients in Indiana, I ask that the study committee on dialysis coverage act now to ensure that the rights of dialysis patients – freedom of choice and access to continuous quality care – are protected.

Sincerely,

Chad Lennox  
Executive Director