

June 23, 2016

Senator Susan M. Collins  
Chairman, Special Committee on Aging  
G31 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6050

Senator Claire McCaskill  
Ranking Member, Special Committee on Aging  
G31 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6050

Dear Senators Collins and McCaskill:

The Pew Charitable Trusts (Pew) commends you for your leadership on palliative and end-of-life care issues. With a rapidly aging society, it is not only appropriate but necessary for policymakers to look at ways the health system could help individuals with serious illnesses take greater control over their own health care.

Medicare's decision last year to reimburse health care providers when they discuss end-of-life care with patients was an important first step in improving end-of-life care. We believe this hearing today is another important opportunity for policymakers to seek the views of experts on ways to best support the medical, psychological, emotional and spiritual needs of individuals with life threatening illness. In particular, Pew supports efforts by lawmakers to pass legislation that would:

- Direct Medicare to develop, test, and adopt quality measures that are appropriate for palliative and end-of-life care.
- Expand the use of state Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST) programs.
- Require the administration to study the use, portability, and electronic storage of advance directives.
- Direct the Department of Health & Human Services to undertake a demonstration focused on advanced illness management.

Existing bicameral and bipartisan legislation would substantially improve how the current health system handles palliative and end-of-life care. These bills include the *Personalize Your Care Act*, introduced by Representatives Phil Roe (R-TN) and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR); and the *Compassionate Care Act*, introduced by Senators Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT). We also endorse the *Care Planning Act*, introduced by Senators Isakson (R-GA) and Warner (D-VA), and greatly appreciate Chairman Collins' support of this legislation. With broad backing from experts in the field and organizations representing consumers, clinicians and faith communities, these pieces of bipartisan legislation would help ensure that an individual's wishes are documented and carried out.

Again, we appreciate your leadership in addressing palliative and end-of-life care, and we look forward to working with you to help advance these important issues.

Sincerely,



Lee Goldberg,  
Director, Project on Improving End of Life Care  
The Pew Charitable Trusts