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## **AHQA Endorses Legislation To Modernize QIO Program**

**Washington, DC --** Legislation introduced today to modernize the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) program will dramatically strengthen a key federal program to help all health professionals improve the quality and safety of patient care. The American Health Quality Association (AHQA) announced its strong support for the bill.

The new bill, introduced by U.S. Rep. Michael Burgess, MD (R-TX), changes the law to make assistance with quality improvement available to more health care providers, and strengthens the QIO program as a national strategy for health care performance measurement and improvement. It reflects recommendations put forward in March by the Institute of Medicine (IOM). The legislation codifies major reforms proposed by AHQA earlier this year to make the Medicare beneficiary complaint process more responsive to consumers, and ensures diversity and consumer representation on QIO governing bodies. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) administers the QIO program to ensure quality care for Medicare beneficiaries.

“Enactment of this legislation will empower QIOs to provide all health professionals with the tools and model practices they need to improve the quality of care,” said AHQA Executive Vice President David Schulke. “We urge Congress to adopt this legislation, so that all Americans can benefit from safer, more effective, and more efficient care.”

Among the most significant provisions of the Burgess bill:

- Make quality improvement assistance available to all health care providers, practitioners, and plans that want help improving care.

- Reform the Medicare beneficiary complaint process by making it more transparent and more accountable to consumers, and to teach providers proven methods for promptly resolving consumer concerns.
- Increase the breadth of experience and consumer representation in QIO governing bodies.

Other provisions in the Burgess bill would:

- Establish and achieve quality and patient safety goals developed and guided by local stakeholders and national experts.
- Increase competition for QIO contracts.
- Strengthen evaluations of both individual QIOs and the impact of the national QIO program on health care quality.
- Guarantee a minimum level of funding and ensure increased resources for expanded responsibilities.
- Extend QIO program activities through a new state option for performance improvement initiatives to benefit Medicaid beneficiaries.

Schulke noted that most of the governing statute for the QIO program was written more than twenty years ago. “We’ve learned a lot about our health care system during that time, and we know a lot more now about how to effectively promote reliably high quality care,” he said. “This legislation will greatly increase the QIOs’ ability to help health care providers deliver safer and more effective care. We are very grateful to Dr. Burgess for his leadership.”

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**The American Health Quality Association** is dedicated to improving the safety and effectiveness of health care. AHQA represents the national network of Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs) that work with hospitals, medical practices, long-term care facilities, home health agencies, health plans, pharmacists, and employers to encourage the spread of best clinical practices and improve systems of care delivery. Visit: [www.ahqa.org](http://www.ahqa.org).