

**National Hospice and Palliative Care
Organization**



November 11, 2004

Honorable Ron Wyden
516 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

I write on behalf of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) to express our strong support for the "*Palliative Care Training Act*." Thank you for your leadership in this area and for your continuing support of hospice care. We believe this legislation will strengthen both the Medicare hospice benefit and hospice care by improving health professional education related to hospice and palliative medicine.

The Hospice and Palliative Care Academic Career Awards (PACA) that your legislation seeks to establish would provide federal support for junior faculty to better equip them to train health care professionals in hospice care and palliative medicine.

As you may know, hospice programs deliver palliative care to the terminally ill. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports that the average length of hospice service has declined significantly. In fact, GAO reports that nearly one-third of all Medicare beneficiaries accessing hospice did so for one week or less. Far too many patients enter a hospice program within days before death, which denies them the full benefit of the comprehensive services that are available and so necessary. The academic career awards established by your bill will greatly improve medical education training and hopefully will improve the timely introduction of hospice services to patients, their families, and their physicians or other health professionals at the most appropriate time during the course of the illness.

NHPCO greatly appreciates both your and Stephanie Kennan's willingness to work with us and to draw on our expertise in the field of hospice care and palliative medicine as you drafted the "*Hospice and Palliative Care Academic Career Awards*."

We hope to continue working with you to improve the quality of end-of-life care. Like you, we agree that strengthening medical education helps to achieve this goal. We look forward to the passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J. Donald Schumacher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "J".

J. Donald Schumacher, PsyD
President and CEO