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Fighting for Health Equity

Recent proposed regulations released by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provide a unique opportunity to address discrimination in health care settings, including new provisions to address language access, gender identity discrimination, and access for individuals with disabilities. While the proposed regulations, which were issued to implement Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act, represent a positive first step, they fall short of their goal to ensure health equity. Advocates for older adults from diverse communities have an opportunity to significantly strengthen the regulations by participating in the comment process.

Justice in Aging is partnering with organizations from across the country to ensure that these regulations offer the strongest possible rights and protections to diverse elders. We will be providing trainings, sample comments, and more over the coming weeks. For example, Justice in Aging and SAGE (Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders) will share insight on the potential impact for older adults during our forthcoming [1557 Proposed Regulations webinar](#) on Wednesday, October 28 at 11:00 a.m. PST/2:00 p.m. ET. [Click here to register](#). Comments will be due to HHS by November 9, 2015.

Continuing Advocacy to Eliminate Medicaid Coverage Gaps in Assisted Living

As [we reported](#) last month, a Cincinnati federal court ruled in favor of assisted living residents Betty Hilleger and Geraldine Saunders and ordered the Ohio Medicaid program to eliminate a coverage gap that had left them with several thousand dollars of debt. The state appealed the ruling; along with our co-counsel, we'll defend the ruling in the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. To protect low-income assisted living residents in Ohio and across the country, we also will advocate with the federal government to change the federal policies underlying the coverage gap. Our first step is submitting a letter to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services from national organizations representing older persons and persons with disabilities, requesting the needed policy changes.

Justice in Aging Battling Rampant Illegal Balance Billing in California and the Nation

Balance billing is when health care providers illegally bill dual eligibles and Medicaid recipients for charges not covered by their insurance. The problem stems, in part, from providers and patients who "don't understand what the protections are," said Justice in Aging attorney Georgia Burke in an interview for [this story in the Los Angeles Times](#), which covered the issue in California while noting that this is a national trend. Awareness about the illegality of balance billing is spreading among both providers and recipients, thanks to heightened media attention about the issue and increased outreach and education. But it's [still a pervasive problem](#). As more dual eligibles and Medicaid patients across the country move to managed care plans, balance billing may continue to increase due to provider confusion. Justice in Aging has created a number of resources for advocates to use when advising clients who have been balance billed. They can be [viewed and downloaded here](#). Advocates who need further technical assistance on Balance Billing issues should [contact Justice in Aging](#) for help.

SSI Restoration Act Gains Momentum in Congress

Support for the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Restoration Act of 2015 is growing. Since it was introduced in May by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Representative Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), the Act has picked up another dozen Senators and almost 35 Representatives. *But we still need your voice*. If you don't see your Senator or Representative on [this list](#), please contact them and ask them to support S 1387 in the Senate or HR 2442 in the House. The Act will make much needed updates to the income and asset limits in the SSI program, which will relieve some of the crushing poverty under which people who depend on SSI for their survival live. If writing, feel free to use [this sample constituent letter](#).

National Aging and Law Conference

Registration is now open for the National Aging and Law Conference in Washington DC, which takes place on October 29-30 at the Hilton Arlington. This year's theme is Celebrating Anniversaries with Action as 2015 is the 80th anniversary of Social Security, the 50th anniversary of Medicare, Medicaid, and the Older Americans Act, and the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Justice in Aging was part of the planning committee and is a sponsor of the event, and attorneys Jennifer

Goldberg, Eric Carlson, and Kate Lang [are all program speakers](#). You can [register here](#).

Advocacy Starts at Home Event in Washington DC

We hope you can join us for Justice in Aging's annual fall awards event on Thursday, November 12 in Washington, DC. You can [purchase tickets and sponsorships](#) from now through October 30. We'll be honoring Lynn Friss Feinberg from AARP's Public Policy Institute with the Paul Nathanson Distinguished Advocate Award, as we enjoy food and drink, and celebrate family caregivers as the important advocates they are in the lives of older adults. Hope to see you there.

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