



American Academy of Family Physicians

April 23, 2007

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reid:

The *Deficit Reduction Act* (DRA) of 2005 contained a provision that has caused a great deal of concern for many of the 93,800 members of the American Academy of Family Physicians. This is the requirement that all United States citizens applying for or renewing Medicaid coverage present "satisfactory documentary evidence" of their citizenship. This new citizenship documentation requirement went into effect on July 1, 2006 and impacts an estimated 50 million U.S. citizens receiving Medicaid benefits as well as many more seeking to apply. States that do not comply risk losing federal matching funds.

The implementation of this requirement has proved to be both costly and burdensome to states, and places eligible Medicaid applicants and beneficiaries at risk of losing services. Indeed, the acceptable forms of citizenship documentation under the DRA are excessively proscriptive and the system by which states are mandated to obtain these documents is complicated at best. The AAFP members are so concerned about the threat that this requirement poses to the health care of the nation's lower income citizens that our 2006 Congress of Delegates voted to recommend that Congress repeal this provision of the DRA.

While the provision is designed to prevent fraudulent use of health care services by those who are not citizens, many of the nation's poor, who are American citizens, cannot locate the requisite documentation, either because they lack financial resources or because of their own poor health. The effect of this provision is to drive more of our lower income citizens to resort to waiting while their health deteriorates and they can secure their health care services in hospital emergency rooms, where they can't be turned away.

When Congress debates children's health coverage, the AAFP recommends that the current citizenship documentation requirement be repealed.

Sincerely,

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