



*Preserving access to quality care*  
**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Triangle Home Medical Equipment Providers Rally for Jobs During President Obama Visit**

*Expansion of Disastrous Medicare Bidding System Costing Jobs, Threatening Patient Care*

(Apex, N.C.) – Dozens of stakeholders from the Triangle's home medical equipment (HME) industry grabbed homemade signs and rallied for jobs around the corner from where President Obama touted his jobs bill at a local business that outsources jobs to Costa Rica.

Organized by the North Carolina Association for Medical Equipment Services (NCAMES), the rally was designed to bring attention to Obama administration policies decimating home medical equipment providers and their employees, such as expansion of the disastrous Medicare bidding system for HME providers.

"At the same time the President is touting a bill to create jobs, his own policies are literally killing jobs in the middle of a recession," said NCAMES Executive Director Beth Bowen, adding, "What's worse, the jobs being lost are having a negative impact on quality access to patient care."

Multiple regional news outlets spoke with rally participants, with Bowen and her members granting interviews to both electronic and print media.

Bowen explained that thousands of jobs across North Carolina and many more nationwide are threatened by restrictive Medicare bidding rules implemented by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to cover-up blatant failure of the Federal government to ensure access to care for seniors and patients in need of home medical equipment.

Approximately eight million Americans require some type of medical care in the home such as medical oxygen, wheelchairs, hospital beds, diabetic supplies, infusion therapy, inhalation drugs, and other medically required equipment, services and supplies.

Round 1 of Medicare's bidding program was implemented in nine metropolitan areas throughout the country in January 2011, including Charlotte. This summer, CMS announced plans to proceed with expanding the program to 91 more metropolitan areas by July 2013 and nationwide by 2016.

This highly criticized, restrictive government oversight program dictates which HME businesses may continue to service patients in need of equipment and services such as oxygen therapy, enteral nutrients (tube feeding), continuous positive air pressure (CPAP) and respiratory assistive devices, power wheelchairs, walkers and hospital beds.

Patients in North Carolina and throughout the U.S. have been reporting widespread difficulty finding a local equipment or service provider, dangerous delays in obtaining medically required equipment and services, and longer than necessary, expensive hospital stays due to trouble being discharged. HME providers have reported cutbacks in services, staffing layoffs, and sub-industry "suicide bids" caused by the bidding program.

Numerous economists and industry leaders continue to rail against the bidding program, including University of Maryland professor Peter Cramton who has testified multiple times in front of Congress, warning that the program will fail.  
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Cramton issued a warning to Congress co-signed by 166 other economists criticizing the program's design and identifying fatal flaws such as non-binding bids and a system that encourages lowball bids not based on costs.

According to Bowen, if Medicare's bidding program is allowed to continue, it is going to encourage monopolies by larger out-of-state HME suppliers who will be the only ones able to provide products and services at low prices approved by the Federal government.

NCAMES is continuing to actively educate patients, government and business leaders on the devastating effects of Medicare's HME bidding program, in addition to directly lobbying elected officials in the U.S. House and Senate. The organization has launched SaveJobsNC.com and is engaged in other educational outreach to inform taxpayers in North Carolina and throughout the country how much the Medicare HME bidding program is costing in terms of money, jobs and innovations in life-sustaining in-home care.

For more details on the restrictive Medicare bidding program and its effects on patients and jobs in North Carolina, visit [www.savejobsnc.com](http://www.savejobsnc.com).

#### ABOUT NCAMES

*With close to 300 member companies and growing, the North Carolina Association for Medical Equipment Services (NCAMES) is the statewide leader in preserving access to safe, affordable, and therapeutic home medical equipment. We provide advocacy and education to home medical equipment (HME) providers statewide dedicated to helping North Carolina's growing senior population and patients of all ages gain more mobility and experience a high quality of life in the comfort and privacy of their own homes. Instrumental in passing the nation's first HME licensure law which has been working to ensure quality home health care since 1995, NCAMES continues to advocate for seniors and patients in need. For more information, visit [www.ncames.org](http://www.ncames.org) or call (919) 387-1221.*

