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**Basketball Legend Alonzo Mourning Joins Nation's Kidney Care Leaders to Voice Concern Over Proposed Cuts to Medicare's Dialysis Benefit**

*Leaders Warn That Proposed 12 Percent Reduction Will Lead to Facility Closures, Diminished Access and Quality*

Washington, DC – Basketball legend Alonzo Mourning is in Washington, DC, today for meetings with policy makers and elected officials to argue against proposed cuts to Medicare's dialysis benefit -- cuts that kidney care leaders warn will have negative consequences for patient access and quality.

Mourning, who has kidney disease and had a kidney transplant a decade ago, has become a fierce advocate for disease awareness and public policy affecting people with kidney failure. Mourning was joined by national leaders of Kidney Care Partners, including Chairman Ron Kuerbitz, as well as CEOs of the National Kidney Foundation, the American Kidney Fund, Dialysis Patient Citizens, and Past Chair of Renal Physicians Association, who together made their case to policymakers and elected officials.

Their issue involves a July 1 "proposed rule" by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) – the government agency that oversees Medicare – that would cut funding for dialysis by 12 percent,\*\* or \$30 dollars on each \$246 payment that Medicare would have paid per treatment for calendar year 2014.

Medicare's end-stage renal disease (ESRD) benefit currently covers nearly 85 percent of the more than 400,000 Americans with kidney failure who rely on this program for their life-sustaining dialysis care. Because of patients' heavy reliance on Medicare to cover dialysis, kidney care organizations expressed unified opposition to the proposed deep cuts. According community leaders, if the cuts are made, Medicare would fail to cover the cost for each 3-4 hour dialysis session for beneficiaries with kidney failure.

"I came to Washington today because health care for Americans with kidney failure is an issue I care about. And when the leaders of our country's top kidney patient organizations tell me they have a problem, then I know I have a problem, too." Said Mourning. "One thing is for certain: cuts this deep will have consequences, and those consequences will end up hurting patients, eliminating jobs, and reversing quality improvements that have been made in recent years."

"On July 1, 40 years to the day that the Medicare ESRD benefit went into effect, the federal government released this proposal to dramatically cut dialysis reimbursement." Said Ron

Kuerbitz, Chairman of Kidney Care Partners. "For the first time since the dialysis benefit went into effect, the commitment made to Americans with kidney failure is in doubt. Today, we urge policy makers in Washington to live up to the commitment they made 40 years ago."

Patient and professional organizations across the country agree that if the proposed rule becomes final, the cuts will have a devastating impact on the nation's dialysis system, especially in some rural and inner city areas. Kidney care leaders urging CMS to reverse course before the rule is finalized.

*\*\* The CY 2014 proposed base rate per treatment of \$246.47 would be reduced by \$29.52, the adjusted difference between the 2007 and 2012 per treatment amount, resulting in the CY 2014 proposed ESRD PPS base rate of \$216.95. This adjustment results in an overall 12 percent reduction in Medicare payments for CY 2014. {Source: CMS FACT SHEET}*