



THOMAS J. VILSACK
GOVERNOR

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

SALLY J. PEDERSON
LT. GOVERNOR

July 21, 2003

Honorable Bill Owens
Office of the Governor
136 State Capitol
Denver, CO 80203-1792

Dear Governor Owens:

I understand that you are in the process of considering whether to send a letter to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) requesting an opt-out from the federal physician supervision requirement for Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs). As you consider this issue, I thought you might find it useful to have an update concerning developments since I signed the opt-out letter in Iowa more than 18 months ago.

Since the opt-out decision in December 2001, the opt-out has proved to be a remarkable success in many areas. The opt-out has provided clarity and consistency between Iowa and federal law. Iowa CRNAs continue to provide outstanding safe anesthesia services to our citizens across Iowa. Absolutely no reports have been made of problems or changes in the quality of care provided. Physicians continue to rely on CRNAs to provide anesthesia care to their patients, and opting out has eliminated the confusion about supervision and liability issues for surgeons. This decision has also eliminated the confusion created because of the inconsistency between Medicare reimbursement rules and state law. These changes have resulted in an improved outlook for rural Iowa healthcare.

I have received many letters from hospital administrators, physicians and healthcare organizations praising the overwhelming success of the opt-out. I have also received notice from the Iowa Board of Nursing and the Iowa Department of Public Health that the quality of care given by CRNAs has never been higher. The high-quality CRNAs in Iowa are great examples of the professionalism that CRNAs across the country exhibit.

Over the last 18 months Iowa has proven the intent of the opt-out change is a complete success in practice. I recommend this decision to any state considering the option.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Vilsack".

Thomas J. Vilsack
Governor