

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) this week reintroduced legislation that would make acupuncture a covered service for Medicare and the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program participants. The congressman's Federal Acupuncture Coverage Act would provide access to acupuncture for Medicare's 44 million beneficiaries and the 8 million federal workers, their dependents and retirees who are covered under the FEHB.

"Acupuncture has long been credited with relieving pain, nausea, digestive problems, and many other ailments. It is entirely unacceptable that Medicare and the Federal Employees Health Benefits program don't cover acupuncture treatment and thus force plan participants to forego acupuncture or pay for it entirely out of their own pocket," Hinchey said. "The majority of private insurers cover acupuncture, yet the federal government's health plans continue to ignore this very valid and effective form of medical treatment. In a country as great as ours no American should ever be denied access to any legitimate forms of medical care that can make them healthier and more comfortable."

Hinchey has introduced the Federal Acupuncture Coverage Act since 1993, his first year in Congress. Hinchey previously advocated for acupuncturists at the state level, where as a member of the New York State Assembly, he introduced and secured passage of legislation to license acupuncturists in the state.

"Passage of this bill would provide 52 million Americans with health coverage for acupuncture services. This is the humane thing to do and I encourage my colleagues to pass this important piece of legislation," Hinchey said.

The Federal Acupuncture Coverage Act would provide coverage for acupuncture services under Medicare and FEHB. Coverage would apply to services rendered by state-licensed, registered or certified professionals. At present, more than 40 states and the District of Columbia accredit acupuncturists.