

May 24, 2011

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
Chairman, Senate Committee on
Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3102

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Republican, Committee on
Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0203

Dear Chairman Bingaman and Ranking Member Murkowski,

The undersigned organizations urge you support S. 99, the American Medical Isotope Production Act of 2011 when it comes before the U.S. Senate. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on the bill February 1, 2011, and reported out of committee on April 12, 2011.

S. 99 is urgently needed legislation that would provide the U.S. Department of Energy the authority to aid in the domestic development of essential medical isotope production. S. 99 is intended to dramatically help ensure that U.S. patients have a stable and reliable supply of diagnostic and therapeutic medical isotopes.

Moreover, as you may know, on November 5, 2009, the House passed H.R. 3276, American Medical Isotope Production Act of 2009, by a vote of 400-17. S. 99, which is similar to H.R. 3276 in goals and objectives, is expected to have considerable support in the House. The Act is balanced, bipartisan legislation that addresses the recent shortfall in the availability of critical medical isotopes which has had a high negative impact on patients in the U.S.

Molybdenum-99 (Mo-99) is a critical medical radioisotope, whose decay product Technetium-99m (Tc-99m), is used in more than 14 million nuclear medicine procedures across the nation annually. Physicians who use Tc-99m for the diagnosis of common cancers, heart and other diseases, fully rely upon a steady and predictable supply. The very short six-hour half-life of Tc-99m, while beneficial to patients and health care professionals, precludes any efforts to maintain an inventory. In addition, the domestic supply of Mo-99 (to produce Tc-99m-generators) is entirely dependent upon aging foreign reactors that have faced extended shutdowns for repair and maintenance.

As a consequence, the U.S. supply has been repeatedly and significantly disrupted. Many patients who need imaging with Tc-99m-based radiopharmaceuticals face lengthy delays in the availability of nuclear medicine imaging, or have been forced to resort to alternative diagnostic and therapeutic procedures that involved the potential of more invasive procedures (with possible higher clinical risks to patients), greater radiation dosage, lower accuracy, and higher costs.

In order to avoid compromising patient care and increasing medical costs, a continuous and reliable supply of medical radioisotopes is clearly essential. It is also critical that

domestic production capability for Mo-99 be developed. S. 99 provides the needed support to accelerate the process of conversion so that the industry can move even more aggressively in this direction and be able to meet the time frame highlighted in this bill.

Chairman Bingaman and Ranking Member Murkowski, we hope you will join the patients, physicians, radioisotope manufacturers, and our professional organizations to quickly enact S. 99. We would welcome the opportunity to answer any question you or your staff may have about the bill or the medical isotope industry. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dominique Delbeke, MD
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Society of Nuclear Medicine

Edward Maher, ScD., CHP
President
Health Physics Society

Anthony Seibert, Ph.D., FAAPM,
FACR, FSIIM
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