

American House of Representatives Passes Bill to Repeal Pathology Tendering

In an unusual show of solidarity on an issue, American Republicans and Democrats reached an agreement in the House of Representatives Wednesday that will herald the end of competitive tendering for pathology laboratory contracts, if passed by the Senate.

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA) says the overwhelming support for the bid, 355 to 59, was a clear demonstration for New Zealand politicians of the inappropriateness of competitive tendering processes for medical services.

The President of the American Clinical Laboratory Association, Alan Mertz, said “Medicare beneficiaries can thank the House for recognizing the negative impact the competitive bidding program would have on seniors’ access to high quality laboratory services.”

“We have long opposed the competitive bidding project—not only because of the concern for beneficiaries’ care—but because it imposes unworkable requirements and ignores the complexity of laboratory services and the differences in types of tests and laboratories,” he added. “Ironically, ‘competitive bidding’ for laboratory services would have resulted in less competition and lower quality of services.”

The New Zealand Vice President of the RCPA, Dr Richard Steele, says Mertz’s message is completely in line with what the RCPA has been telling the Ministry of Health for years.

“We have been calling repeatedly for an end to the onerous District Health Board tendering, to no avail,” says Dr Steele.

“It is heartening to see a similar campaign undertaken by our American colleagues has at last borne fruit, and the devastating impact of tendering on our ability to deliver quality pathology services has been recognised.

“We ask that our politicians also pay heed to the message.”

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