

108TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. BINGAMAN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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**A BILL**

To amend title II of the Social Security Act to phase out the 24-month waiting period for disabled individuals to become eligible for medicare benefits, to eliminate the waiting period for individuals with life-threatening conditions, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

4 (a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the  
5 “Medicare Disability Eligibility Improvement Act of  
6 2004”.

7 (b) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents of  
8 this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.  
Sec. 2. Phase out of waiting period for medicare disability benefits.  
Sec. 3. Elimination of waiting period for individuals with life-threatening conditions.  
Sec. 4. Institute of medicine study and report on delay and prevention of disability conditions.

1 **SEC. 2. PHASE OUT OF WAITING PERIOD FOR MEDICARE**  
2 **DISABILITY BENEFITS.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 226(b) of the Social Secu-  
4 rity Act (42 U.S.C. 426(b)) is amended—

5 (1) in paragraph (2)(A), by striking “, and has  
6 for 24 calendar months been entitled to,” and insert-  
7 ing “, and for the waiting period (as defined in sub-  
8 section (k)) has been entitled to,”;

9 (2) in paragraph (2)(B), by striking “, and has  
10 been for not less than 24 months,” and inserting “,  
11 and has been for the waiting period (as defined in  
12 subsection (k)),”;

13 (3) in paragraph (2)(C)(ii), by striking “, in-  
14 cluding the requirement that he has been entitled to  
15 the specified benefits for 24 months,” and inserting  
16 “, including the requirement that the individual has  
17 been entitled to the specified benefits for the waiting  
18 period (as defined in subsection (k)),”; and

19 (4) in the flush matter following paragraph  
20 (2)(C)(ii)(II)—

21 (A) in the first sentence, by striking “for  
22 each month beginning with the later of (I) July

1           1973 or (II) the twenty-fifth month of his enti-  
2           tlement or status as a qualified railroad retire-  
3           ment beneficiary described in paragraph (2),  
4           and” and inserting “for each month beginning  
5           after the waiting period (as so defined) for  
6           which the individual satisfies paragraph (2)  
7           and”;

8           (B) in the second sentence, by striking  
9           “the ‘twenty-fifth month of his entitlement’ re-  
10          fers to the first month after the twenty-fourth  
11          month of entitlement to specified benefits re-  
12          ferred to in paragraph (2)(C) and”;

13          (C) in the third sentence, by striking “,  
14          but not in excess of 78 such months”.

15          (b) SCHEDULE FOR PHASE OUT OF WAITING PE-  
16          RIOD.—Section 226 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.  
17          426) is amended by adding at the end the following new  
18          subsection:

19          “(k) For purposes of subsection (b) (and for purposes  
20          of section 1837(g)(1) of this Act and section 7(d)(2)(ii)  
21          of the Railroad Retirement Act of 1974), the term ‘waiting  
22          period’ means—

23                 “(1) for 2005, 24 months;

24                 “(2) for 2006, 22 months;

25                 “(3) for 2007, 20 months;

1           “(4) for 2008, 18 months;  
2           “(5) for 2009, 16 months;  
3           “(6) for 2010, 14 months;  
4           “(7) for 2011, 12 months;  
5           “(8) for 2012, 10 months;  
6           “(9) for 2013, 8 months;  
7           “(10) for 2014, 6 months;  
8           “(11) for 2015, 4 months;  
9           “(12) for 2016, 2 months; and  
10           “(13) for 2017 and each subsequent year, 0  
11 months.”.

12           (c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

13           (1) SUNSET.—Effective January 1, 2017, sub-  
14 section (f) of section 226 of the Social Security Act  
15 (42 U.S.C. 426) is repealed.

16           (2) MEDICARE DESCRIPTION.—Section 1811(2)  
17 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1395c(2)) is amended by  
18 striking “entitled for not less than 24 months” and  
19 inserting “entitled for the waiting period (as defined  
20 in section 226(k))”.

21           (3) MEDICARE COVERAGE.—Section 1837(g)(1)  
22 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1395p(g)(1)) is amended by  
23 striking “of the later of (A) April 1973 or (B) the  
24 third month before the 25th month of such entitle-  
25 ment” and inserting “of the third month before the

1 first month following the waiting period (as defined  
2 in section 226(k)) applicable under section 226(b)”.

3 (4) RAILROAD RETIREMENT SYSTEM.—Section  
4 7(d)(2)(ii) of the Railroad Retirement Act of 1974  
5 (45 U.S.C. 231f(d)(2)(ii)) is amended—

6 (A) by striking “, for not less than 24  
7 months” and inserting “, for the waiting period  
8 (as defined in section 226(k) of the Social Secu-  
9 rity Act); and

10 (B) by striking “could have been entitled  
11 for 24 calendar months, and” and inserting  
12 “could have been entitled for the waiting period  
13 (as defined in section 226(k) of the Social Secu-  
14 rity Act), and”.

15 (d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Except as provided in sub-  
16 section (c)(1), the amendments made by this section shall  
17 apply to insurance benefits under title XVIII of the Social  
18 Security Act with respect to items and services furnished  
19 in months beginning at least 90 days after the date of  
20 the enactment of this Act.

21 **SEC. 3. ELIMINATION OF WAITING PERIOD FOR INDIVID-**  
22 **UALS WITH LIFE-THREATENING CONDITIONS.**

23 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 226(h) of the Social Secu-  
24 rity Act (42 U.S.C. 426(h)) is amended—

1           (1) by redesignating paragraphs (1), (2), and  
2           (3) as subparagraphs (A), (B), and (C), respectively;

3           (2) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A)  
4           (as redesignated by paragraph (1)), by inserting  
5           “(1)” after “(h)”;

6           (3) in paragraph (1) (as designated by para-  
7           graph (2))—

8           (A) in the matter preceding subparagraph  
9           (A) (as redesignated by paragraph (1)), by in-  
10          serting “or any other life-threatening condition  
11          identified by the Secretary” after “amyotrophic  
12          lateral sclerosis (ALS)”;

13          (4) in subparagraph (B) (as redesignated by  
14          paragraph (1)), by striking “(rather than twenty-  
15          fifth month)”;

16          (5) by adding at the end the following new  
17          paragraph:

18          “(2) For purposes of identifying life-threatening con-  
19          ditions under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall compile  
20          a list of conditions that are fatal without medical treat-  
21          ment. In compiling such list, the Secretary shall consult  
22          with the Director of the National Institutes of Health (in-  
23          cluding the Office of Rare Diseases), the Director of the  
24          Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Director

1 of the National Science Foundation, and the Institute of  
2 Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences.”.

3 (c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by  
4 this section shall apply to insurance benefits under title  
5 XVIII of the Social Security Act with respect to items and  
6 services furnished in months beginning at least 90 days  
7 after the date of the enactment of this Act.

8 **SEC. 4. INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE STUDY AND REPORT ON**  
9 **DELAY AND PREVENTION OF DISABILITY**  
10 **CONDITIONS.**

11 (a) STUDY.—The Secretary of Health and Human  
12 Services (in this section referred to as the “Secretary”)  
13 shall request that the Institute of Medicine of the National  
14 Academy of Sciences conduct a study on the range of dis-  
15 ability conditions that can be delayed or prevented if indi-  
16 viduals receive access to health care services and coverage  
17 before the condition reaches disability levels.

18 (b) REPORT.—Not later than the date that is 2 years  
19 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall  
20 submit to Congress a report containing the results of the  
21 Institute of Medicine study authorized under this section.

22 (c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
23 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section  
24 \$750,000 for the period of fiscal years 2005 and 2006.