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CONTACT:

Kate Moraras, Hepatitis B Foundation
(215) 489-4900 / Kate.Moraras@hepb.org

Hep B United Applauds CMS Final Decision to Cover Screening for Hepatitis B Infection
Hepatitis B Screening Test Added as a Preventive Service for Medicare Beneficiaries

Doylestown, Pa. – Hep B United, a national coalition co-chaired by the Hepatitis B Foundation and the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO), applauds the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) final decision to cover screening for hepatitis B infection at no cost to individuals entitled to benefits under Medicare Part A or enrolled in Medicare Part B. The CMS decision states that a screening test is covered for individuals who are determined high risk for hepatitis B as identified by a primary care provider in a primary care setting.

“This decision is a significant step forward to identify those with chronic hepatitis B across the U.S., link them to care, and prevent end-stage liver disease and liver cancer,” said Joan Block, RN, BSN, executive director and co-founder of the Hepatitis B Foundation. “While we are pleased with this decision, we must continue to ensure that all individuals at risk for hepatitis B infection have access to this critical preventive service in a broad array of settings, in addition to the primary care setting.”

Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). Up to 2.2 million Americans are living with chronic hepatitis B infection and approximately 67% are unaware of their infection. Of the identified and reported cases of HBV in the U.S. between 2007 and 2012, 15.6% were over the age of 65 and part of the Medicare covered population. Left untreated, up to 25% of people with hepatitis B develop serious liver problems, including cirrhosis and liver cancer. HBV is a primary risk factor for liver cancer, the second deadliest cancer for men and women.

Hepatitis B is also associated with significant health disparities in the United States, disproportionately impacting Asian American and Pacific Islander and African immigrant communities. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders make up 50% of the HBV infection burden in the U.S., and have liver cancer rates that are up to 13 times higher than Caucasian populations.

“We very excited about this new preventive benefit for our Medicare population that will save lives and costs for our health care system, and we are fully committed to working with all of our health care partners in ensuring individuals at high risk for HBV infection are aware of this new service,” said Jeff Caballero, MPH, executive director of AAPCHO.

The CMS Decision Memo for Screening for Hepatitis B Virus Infection is available online at <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/details/nca-decision-memo.aspx?NCAId=283>.

About Hep B United

Hep B United is a national coalition to address the public health challenge of hepatitis B. The goal of Hep B United is to support local community coalition efforts across the U.S. to increase hepatitis B awareness, screening, vaccination and linkage to care for all high-risk communities. For more information about Hep B United, please visit <http://hepbunited.org>.

About the Hepatitis B Foundation

Headquartered in Doylestown, Pa., the Hepatitis B Foundation is the only national nonprofit organization solely dedicated to finding a cure for hepatitis B and improving the quality of life for those affected worldwide through research, education and patient advocacy. . For more information about the Hepatitis B Foundation, please visit to www.hepb.org.

About AAPCHO

AAPCHO is a national association of 35 community health organizations dedicated to promoting advocacy, collaboration and leadership that improves the health status and access of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the United States. For more information on AAPCHO, please visit www.aapcho.org.

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