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June 10, 2008

The United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the millions of members and supporters of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, I am writing to express our strong support for S. 3101, the *Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008*. We applaud Senate Finance Committee Chairman Baucus for introducing and moving this important legislation to strengthen the Medicare program for the over 44 million seniors and people with disabilities it serves.

The *Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008* includes many beneficiary improvement and protection provisions that the National Committee supports. This includes a modest increase in payments to physicians, rather than a scheduled cut of 10.6 percent, which will help ensure that Medicare beneficiaries have access to their doctors. In addition, we support the bill's improvements in preventive and mental health benefits; access to needed physical, occupational and speech-language therapy; and improvements in programs that help low-income Medicare beneficiaries with their out-of-pocket health care and prescription drug costs.

The National Committee is very pleased that the *Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008* also begins reducing overpayments in the Medicare Advantage (MA) program, which pays private insurance companies an average of 13 to 17 percent more than it would cost traditional Medicare to care for the same beneficiary. The bill includes protections for both beneficiaries and providers in Private Fee-for-Service (PFFS) plans by requiring plans to establish provider networks and to report quality of care measures required of other MA plans. In addition, we strongly support provisions in the bill that prohibit many of the abusive marketing practices used to enroll beneficiaries in private Medicare Advantage plans, often without them realizing they are leaving traditional Medicare, and in Part D prescription drug plans.

Our organization is fully supportive of S. 3101, the *Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008*, and I urge you to vote for this bill when it is considered in the Senate. Millions of beneficiaries are counting on you to improve the Medicare program.

Cordially,

Barbara B. Kennelly
President and CEO