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September 23, 2009

The Honorable Charles B. Rangel
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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 support for your legislation, H.R. 3631, the *Medicare Premium Fairness Act*, which will protect certain Medicare beneficiaries from an increase in their Part B premiums in 2010.

As you know, Social Security's Trustees are currently projecting that, for the first time in thirty-five years, seniors will not see a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) in 2010, despite experiencing increases in their out-of-pocket health care costs. In this circumstance, current law contains a "hold harmless" provision that prevents reductions in Social Security checks for about three-quarters of beneficiaries by prohibiting an increase in their Part B premiums. We share your concern that this "hold harmless" provision does not protect new enrollees, higher-income enrollees, enrollees whose premiums are not deducted from their Social Security checks, and low-income dual-eligible beneficiaries whose premiums are paid for through state Medicaid programs.

It is my understanding that your legislation would extend the current "hold harmless" policy to these remaining categories of Medicare enrollees so that their 2010 Part B monthly premiums will also remain at the current \$96.40. This is an important first step toward protecting Americas millions of seniors who are burdened with high health care costs even with Medicare and we thank you for your leadership on this important issue. We look forward to working with you on legislation to further protect our nation's seniors by restoring the 2010 Social Security COLA.

Cordially,

Barbara B. Kennelly
President and CEO