SCAC
Senior Citizen Advisory Council
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Dennis Griffin, Chairperson

December 28, 2007

The Honorable Joseph Knollenberg
415 Cannon
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Senior Citizen Advisory Council urges Representative Knollenberg to Support The Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act of 2007 (CHAMP Act) when Revising the Medicare Legislation

Dear Representative Knollenberg:

The Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency's (OLHSA) Senior Citizen Advisory Council (SCAC) voted unanimously at its December 18th meeting to urge you to support the following CHAMP measures when you revise the Medicare legislation

- Increasing the Part D subsidy asset allowance: The Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act of 2007 (CHAMP) increases the asset allowance for Part D to $17,000 for an individual ($34,000 for a couple). This will allow low-income beneficiaries to retain modest retirement savings and still qualify for help with Part D drug costs.

- Updating the income and asset allowances for Medicare Savings Programs: These programs pay for Parts A & B cost-sharing for low-income beneficiaries. Currently, the income eligibility limit is lower than for Part D assistance. The asset limit has been frozen at $4,000 individual ($6,000 for a couple) since these programs were enacted. CHAMP instead aligns income and asset rules with the requirements for the Part D subsidy, and makes all of these programs permanent. The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) made a similar recommendation of aligning income and asset criteria across all programs serving low-income Medicare beneficiaries.

- Improving enrollment in Medicare Savings Programs and the Part D subsidy: Enrollment in Medicare Saving Programs has been disappointingly low since their inception. Part D low-income subsidy enrollment is only slightly better. CHAMP contains several provisions to improve enrollment rates, including simplifying applications, eliminating estate recovery, and increasing the Social Security Administration's role in MSP enrollment. Additional funding for community-based outreach will also increase enrollment.

For over 25 years the Senior Citizen Advisory Council, an advisory body to OLHSA's Board of Directors, has monitored issues and taken positions on policies which affect older adults. OLHSA is a private, non-profit Community Action Agency that has served the low-income, handicapped and elderly of Oakland and Livingston counties since 1964. We urge the Congress to enact these measures that would provide targeted help directly to needy seniors and people with disabilities as they cope with rising health care costs.

Sincerely,

Dennis Griffin, Chair
Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency
Senior Citizens Advisory Council