

September 11, 2009

The Honorable John Kerry
United States Senator
218 Senate Russell Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: DPC Support of the Equal Access to Medicare Options Act of 2009

Dear Senator Kerry:

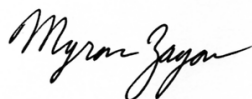
As America's largest dialysis patient organization, Dialysis Patient Citizens (DPC) is proud to represent over 23,000 pre-dialysis and dialysis patients and their families. On a wide variety of issues, we seek to ensure that the patients' point of view is heard and considered by policy makers to ensure continued progress in the quality of care and life for patients with kidney disease. On behalf of our membership, we write today to thank you for introducing the Equal Access to Medicare Options Act of 2009.

Currently, two populations qualify for Medicare—those over the age of 65 and those under the age of 65 who meet certain federal criteria. A diagnosis of End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) satisfies these conditions and makes ESRD patients under age 65 eligible for Medicare. Medicare requires the patient to pay deductibles and co-pays. The typical patient responsibility under Medicare Part B is 20%. Many ESRD Medicare beneficiaries, particularly dialysis patients who receive treatments at least three times per week, cannot afford to pay these large deductibles and co-pays. As a result, patients often must spend down their assets to become Medicaid eligible. By contrast, Medicare beneficiaries over the age of 65 can purchase MediGap insurance—picking up the 20% not covered by Medicare Part B, helping patients afford their deductibles and co-pays and hopefully keeping them from needing Medicaid coverage.

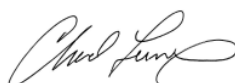
Twenty-nine states currently provide ESRD patients, regardless of age, the ability to purchase Medigap policies—including Florida that passed legislation this year. Your bill would help provide Medicare equality for ESRD patients by extending the right to purchase Medigap insurance policies to all Medicare patients. This would ensure patients have access to full insurance coverage and lower patients' out-of-pocket costs, as well as prevent patients from being forced to spend down to Medicaid levels to obtain secondary coverage.

Again, we commend your leadership on the introduction of the Equal Access to Medicare Options Act of 2009. Please feel to contact us if we can provide any assistance on this issue or others.

Sincerely,



Myron Zayon
President and Dialysis Patient



Chad Lennox
Executive Director