Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 27, 2006

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In a few short days, you will present your State of the Union Address to Members of Congress and the American people. Since this speech traditionally is a forum for discussing past accomplishments and goals for the coming year; we believe that you must level with the public regarding the reality of the new Medicare Prescription Drug Plan and the need for reform.

No amount of optimism will mask the frustration the American people are experiencing during the first month of implementation. Because private drug plans have failed to follow the rules, our most vulnerable senior citizens and persons with disabilities are leaving their pharmacies without the life-sustaining drugs they need. No matter how many steps the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) take to alleviate these immediate emergency problems, it will not be enough to reform a fundamentally complicated, expensive, and unmanageable drug benefit. Because the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 catered to the desires of the pharmaceutical and insurance industries, senior citizens and persons with disabilities were denied the simple option of adding a Medicare-administered prescription drug plan to their existing Medicare benefits. Instead, this law forces beneficiaries to sort through the ever-changing array of plans, premiums, copayments, and formularies offered by dozens of private insurance companies. Because Medicare is prohibited from negotiating for discounts, the drug benefit will never provide seniors and people with disabilities reliable and affordable access to prescription drugs.

We all face a harsh reality and one that must not be ignored by your Administration. It is critical to the health of millions of beneficiaries that you address the fact that all Medicare beneficiaries are not receiving the medically necessary prescriptions they were promised under Medicare Part D. Seniors, pharmacists, state and federal lawmakers are just some of the groups asking you to acknowledge the need for relief and simplification before our citizens are put through more turmoil.

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We pledge our support in working with you to enact a real Medicare drug benefit – one that is affordable and that covers the drugs that seniors and persons with disabilities need. The first step, however, is for you to acknowledge the problems and commit to replace Part D with a meaningful benefit.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey

Pete Stark

Charles B. Rangel

Stephanie Herseth

Lloyd Doggett

Mike Ross

Jim Davis

Sandy Levin