June 23, 2008

The Honorable Charles Rangel  
Chairman  
The Committee on Ways and Means  
1102 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Dingell  
Chairman  
The Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Rangel and Dingell:

On behalf of the Kidney Care Partners, I write to express our support and urge passage of the Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 provisions addressing the Medicare End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Program. Your provisions lay out a blueprint for successful reform of the program.

KCP is a broad alliance of members of the kidney care community that works with renal patients, patient advocates, dialysis care professionals, providers, and manufacturers to improve the quality of care for individuals with kidney disease and kidney failure.

Sections 152 and 153 of the bill contain critical reforms long sought by KCP that will substantially improve the Medicare ESRD Program. The chronic kidney disease (CKD) demonstration projects will improve awareness about the dangers and warning signs of the disease and establish screening programs to identify those at greatest risk. While it is estimated that twenty-six million Americans have CKD, awareness of the disease and meaningful interventions to delay progression or prevent ESRD are lacking.

With proper education and disease management, CKD patients can delay the onset of kidney failure and the need for organ transplantation or dialysis. Patient education leads to improved health outcomes and savings to the Medicare system. Coverage of pre-dialysis education provides patients the tools they need to confidently undertake treatment. Our community is grateful for your recognition of this important benefit and your leadership on efforts to improve the lives of individuals with CKD.

The Medicare program has provided access to life-sustaining care to more than a million patients over three decades. In order to improve quality for the nearly 400,000 Americans with ESRD, KCP has called on Congress to modernize the program by reforming the payment system to reward quality and provide an annual update to the composite rate. We thank you for recognizing the need for modernization in your legislation.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), MedPAC, and Kidney Care Partners all agree that the community is well positioned to engage in a program linking payment to high performance and demonstrated improvement. KCP appreciates your acknowledgement of quality outcomes as a component of reimbursement.

Your legislation also establishes an expanded bundled payment system for ESRD services by 2011. We believe the proposal to allow facilities to phase-in to the new system is a prudent and responsible approach. Implementation of a bundled system is a significant change in dialysis reimbursement,
and patients and providers will need time to adjust. As you know, the effort will also require considerable regulatory time and attention.

KCP feels that your legislation lives up to its name by significantly improving the Medicare ESRD program for both patients and providers. We recognize your continued efforts to ensure access to high quality, lifesaving therapies for dialysis patients and commend all the bill's authors for including these vital reforms, and in particular the time and attention devoted to this issue by Chairman Stark. We look forward to working with you to ensure passage.

Sincerely,

Edward R. Jones, M.D.
Chairman
Kidney Care Partners

AMAG Pharmaceuticals, Inc
American Kidney Fund
American Nephrology Nurses' Association
American Regent, Inc.
American Renal Associates, Inc.
American Society of Nephrology
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology
Amgen
Board of Nephrology Examiners and Technology
California Dialysis Council
Centers for Dialysis Care
DaVita, Inc.
Dialysis Patient Citizens
DSI, Inc.
Fresenius Medical Care North America
Fresenius Medical Care Renal Therapies Group
Genzyme
Kidney Care Council
National Association of Nephrology Technicians and Technologists
National Kidney Foundation
National Renal Administrators Association
Northwest Kidney Centers
Renal Advantage Inc.
Renal Physicians Association
Renal Support Network
Renal Ventures Management, LLC
Satellite Healthcare
U.S. Renal Care
Watson Pharma, Inc.

CC: All Cosponsors of H.R. 1193 in the House of Representatives