WASHINGTON BUREAU · NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
1156 15TH STREET, NW SUITE 915 · WASHINGTON, DC 20005 · P (202) 463-2940 · F (202) 463-2953
E-MAIL: WASHINGTONBUREAU@NAACPNET.ORG · WEB ADDRESS WWW.NAACP.ORG

July 26, 2007

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

via fax

RE: NAACP SUPPORT FOR H.R. 3162, THE CHILDRENS HEALTH AND MEDICARE PROTECTION ACT OF 2007

Dear Chairman Rangel;

On behalf of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), our nation's oldest, largest and most widely-recognized grassroots civil rights organization, I am writing to express the NAACP's enthusiastic support for H.R. 3162, the *Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act of 2007* (CHAMP Act). This crucial legislation will clearly fill the much-needed gaps that currently exist in health care services for some of our most vulnerable citizens: low-income children, seniors and the disabled. H.R. 3162 will go a long way toward ensuring that all American children and seniors, regardless of their race, ethnicity or socio-economic status receive the high-quality health care they need and deserve.

Currently, just under 12% of all American children remain uninsured. Every 47 seconds, another baby is born without health insurance. Of these children, almost 90% live in households with at least one working parent. For racial and ethnic minority children, the picture is even more dismal: one out of eight African American children is uninsured, which translates into sixteen percent of the uninsured children in our Nation. 3.5 million Hispanic children, or 1 out of every 5, do not have health insurance. Together, racial or ethnic minority children make up more than 62% of those who are uninsured, and the time to correct this national disgrace is now.

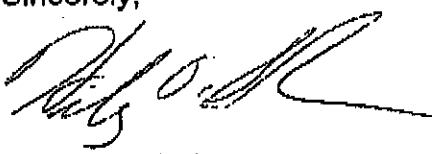
Unfortunately, the health care scenario for low-income seniors, and specifically African American seniors, is not much better. African Americans currently represent a disproportionate number of low-income Medicare beneficiaries, who depend on the program for their health care. While African Americans make up about 10% of all Medicare beneficiaries, they comprise 20% of the lowest-income Medicare beneficiaries, those who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid. This means that African Americans are particularly vulnerable to the cuts in services and reductions in Medicare and Medicaid options that have been enacted over the last several years.

As written H.R. 3162, the CHAMP Act, will go a long way toward reversing this trend and providing much needed Medicare services to low-income seniors and disabled Americans as well as ensuring that all American children receive the health care they deserve. Specifically, the CHAMP Act improves Medicare's preventive benefits and mental health services, and makes it more likely that seniors can see their own doctors. Furthermore, the legislation expands the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) so that every American child may be assured of high-quality health care coverage.

Lastly, the NAACP is especially pleased to see the inclusion of provisions in the bill requiring the federal government to study and address health care disparities. In the United States the color of your skin, your ethnic background and where you live can not only influence your health care access and quality; they can well determine them. The statistics are as unthinkable as they are conclusive: African Americans are 23% more likely to die from all kinds of cancer than whites. African American infant mortality rates are more than 2 times higher that that for their Caucasian counterparts. The death rate from asthma is more than 3 times higher among African Americans than among whites. The diabetes death rates among African Americans and Hispanics are about 2 times higher than that among Caucasian Americans.

Taking care of our seniors and guaranteeing that every American child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and strong are imperative if we are going to progress as a Nation and as a society. That is why the NAACP strongly supports H.R. 3162, the CHAMP Act, and is committed to working towards its quick enactment. Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office at (202) 463-2940. Thank you so much for your leadership in this area.

Sincerely,



Hilary O. Shelton
Director