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The Honorable William Thomas
Chairman
House Ways and Means Committee
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thomas:

The not-for-profit Alliance for Aging Research supports the conference agreement on the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 and urges its immediate adoption by the 108th Congress.

The Alliance for Aging Research has long championed accelerating medical research in order to alleviate age-related diseases, disabilities and the myriad health problems that can threaten people as they grow older. Our organization is committed to the principle that no American should be denied needed medications because of lack of financial access to the products of medical research.

The Alliance for Aging Research has spoken out for years for an out-patient prescription drug benefit that is financed by Medicare in ways sensitive to market incentives for further research and development. We are mindful that nearly all new drugs, biologics and devices are developed and brought to the market by the private sector, appropriately building upon a sizeable public investment in publicly-shared academic research. Therefore it is critically important that Medicare reform should preserve the important and legitimate incentives that will assure the next generation of even more powerful and effective therapeutics for diseases of aging.

Our Alliance believes the Medicare conference report meets these and other key principles and therefore we are pleased to endorse this historic legislation. With this act the millions of Medicare beneficiaries will no longer have to wait from 15-months to 5 years for access to new state-of-the-art medicines and life-saving and life-enhancing technologies. In addition, and most importantly, it targets those with the greatest need by providing significant low-income subsidies for prescription drugs that will assist millions of Medicare beneficiary's live longer and healthier lives.

The conference agreement addresses the need for increased federal investment in healthcare information and technology infrastructure. It speeds coverage and coding decisions for new technologies. Also, the legislation provides patients greater access to breakthrough clinical trials by covering routine patient care costs for breakthrough medical device trials.

The Alliance for Aging Research urges Congress to adopt final passage of the Medicare conference report, and we look forward to the President's signature making it law. This will be a giant step toward expanding and modernizing Medicare, while preserving the power of science and technology to improve and enhance the lives of our people in the future.

Sincerely,

Daniel Perry
Executive Director