

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 27, 2008

The Honorable Charlie Crist  
Office of the Governor  
PL 05 – The Capitol  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Crist:

We are writing to request your assistance in convincing the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to designate the tri-county area as a single unit for purposes of Medicare payments to Medicare Advantage (MA) plans. As you may know, in 2000 the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) designated Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade Counties into one statistical metropolitan area (SMA) showing a high degree of integration of this area. The SMA has proven to be a successful statistical representation of the social and economic linkages between the urban core and its outlying areas. Thus, it seems fitting that the tri-county area be designated as one under CMS as well.

As you may be aware, the maximum allowable amount of Medicare payments to MA plans in Palm Beach, Broward and Dade Counties are substantially different. Currently, Medicare Advantage plans in Broward County receive approximately \$175 less per patient from Medicare than those in Dade. The difference is even more striking in Palm Beach County, where MA plans receive almost \$233 less per patient than those in Dade. This has resulted in widely divergent benefits for patients in these counties. Examples of disparate benefits include some MA plans paying beneficiaries' Part B or D premiums in Dade but not Palm Beach County. Furthermore, some MA plans in the higher paying counties provide eyeglass and dental benefits to residents but not those living in Palm Beach.

The designation by OMB validates our conviction and those of our constituents, which is that Palm Beach, Broward and Dade Counties should be categorized as one metropolitan area for the purposes of Medicare payments to MA plans. Typically, MA plans in urban areas receive higher Medicare payments. However, as OMB notes, Palm Beach, Broward and Dade Counties have a high degree of social and economic similarities; therefore, there should not be such a disparate range of payments to MA plans.

While Medicare is a federal program, Medicare law section 1853(d)(3)(A) does allow the Governor of a state to petition CMS to change the MA payment method from a county-by-county basis, as is currently the case, to a statewide, metropolitan or consolidated noncontiguous county basis. In light of the 2000 designation by OMB, we believe you

have a strong case with which to argue this position to CMS. As members of Congress from Palm Beach County, we are requesting that you exercise your leadership by petitioning Medicare to change their funding method.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important matter.

With warm regards,



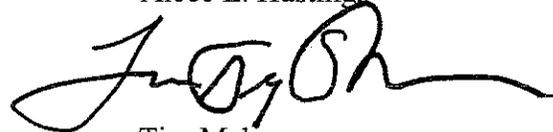
Robert Wexler



Ron Klein



Alcee L. Hastings



Tim Mahoney