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THE KIDNEY CARE COUNCIL STATEMENT ON THE HOUSE SCHIP/MEDICARE PACKAGE – The CHAMP Act

Statement by Rob Foreman, President of The Kidney Care Council (KCC):

WASHINGTON, D.C. (July 25, 2007) - “The quality of kidney care in America has improved significantly, but that progress could be negatively impacted by deep Medicare cuts. In fact, *The Los Angeles Times* reported last month that American dialysis patients still have a higher death rate than Europeans “because of Medicare funding cuts,” (*The Los Angeles Times*, “Care in Need of a Cure,” June 18, 2007). The Kidney Care Council is disappointed to see a proposal in the U.S. House of Representatives that would make even deeper cuts in the current program, does not provide for an annual update, and reduces the bundled payment from 100 percent to 96 percent in ESRD reimbursements. This proposal could disproportionately impact patients who are African American, Hispanic, poor, and elderly.”

“Dialysis providers are working hard to ensure access to quality dialysis care for all patients, regardless of where they live and in spite of an outdated payment system. With 85 percent of dialysis patients relying on Medicare to pay for their treatments, funding cuts will hurt some of the most vulnerable in our country. The impact of this proposal could be felt nationwide, including the urban areas and rural locations where many minorities and low-income patients are currently served.”

“The Kidney Care Council has been working with Congress to improve the current Medicare ESRD payment policy. We have developed payment reform options to ensure that Medicare reimbursement keeps pace with treatment costs while preserving patient access to high quality care. Although the House proposal (The CHAMP Act) includes positive education and training provisions, its overall impact would not be positive to the program. Reducing Medicare payments and not providing for an annual payment update could significantly impact patient access to dialysis care. The current proposal needs more work to make it an improvement for patients over the current system.”

The Kidney Care Council is a trade association of eleven renal care companies including large, small, nonprofit and for-profit companies that collectively provide End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) services to nearly 80 percent of the country’s dialysis patients.

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