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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The Medicare Rights Center (MRC) published
3 "Medicare: A National Treasure for Forty Years" (2005); the
4 Medicare program was created as part of the Social Security
5 Amendments of 1965, and the program will celebrate its 50th
6 anniversary on July 30, 2015; and

7 WHEREAS, The MRC's findings are still valid, to wit: the
8 Medicare program has become a national treasure, reflecting the
9 nation's commitment to the health and independence of older
10 Americans and Americans with disabilities by providing health
11 care coverage to 45 million people; and

12 WHEREAS, The original design of the Medicare program - its
13 universality, shared risk, simplicity, and dependability -
14 created the foundation for its 50 years of success; Medicare's
15 universal nature ensures that virtually all older Americans and
16 many people with disabilities receive the health care they
17 need, while Medicare pools risk in order to share the financial
18 burdens of illness across healthy and sick individuals and
19 affluent and low-income families; for 50 years, Medicare has
20 guaranteed coverage for a defined set of benefits at a uniform
21 and predictable cost to all seniors and to people with
22 disabilities regardless of their income, health status, or
23 where they live and has dramatically improved the quality of

1 life for millions of individuals; and

2 WHEREAS, Among the most important reasons to celebrate the
3 past 50 years of Medicare are: (1) guaranteed access to care
4 for people with Medicare; (2) improved quality of life for
5 older Americans and people with disabilities; (3)
6 administrative efficiency and cost containment; (4) critical
7 support for America's healthcare system; and (5) guaranteed
8 benefits and choice of providers; and

9 WHEREAS, Prior to Medicare, only half of older adults had
10 health insurance; private insurers were unable or unwilling to
11 provide comprehensive, affordable health care coverage to the
12 growing aged population, who were either too old or too sick
13 and therefore too high an insurance risk; through the guarantee
14 of Medicare coverage, the federal government established
15 protections for all people with Medicare that ensure that
16 everyone - including those battling costly illnesses - have
17 access to covered services; and

18 WHEREAS, Medicare is the second largest source of federal
19 spending for HIV care and treatment, and approximately one out
20 of every five HIV-positive Americans receiving regular medical
21 care depends, at least in part, on the Medicare program; and

22 WHEREAS, Medicare has also improved access to care in other

1 ways; for example, Medicare was, and continues to be,
2 instrumental in reducing disparities in access and coverage for
3 racial and ethnic minority groups; and

4 WHEREAS, A 2001 survey demonstrates that people with
5 Medicare are generally more satisfied with their health care
6 than are persons under age 65 who are covered by private
7 insurance; people with Medicare report fewer problems getting
8 access to care, greater confidence about their access, and
9 fewer instances of financial hardship as a result of medical
10 bills; Medicare creates access to health care across many
11 dimensions: access to physician services; access to necessary
12 care; and reduced financial barriers to care; older Americans
13 with Medicare experience comparatively fewer financial
14 barriers to care; and

15 WHEREAS, By the year 2030, 20% of the U.S. population - 77
16 million people - will be eligible for Medicare, compared to the
17 14% of Americans who are Medicare-eligible today; while
18 Medicare gives all Americans a sense of security knowing their
19 parents, grandparents, friends and neighbors can access the
20 health care they need, before long the next generation of
21 Americans will need to count on Medicare too; and

22 WHEREAS, Thanks to Medicare, millions of Americans are able
23 to afford life-saving care, but Medicare also improves the

1 quality of life for older Americans in other ways; for example,
2 Medicare is also a social safety net that has lifted millions
3 of people out of poverty; in fact, since Medicare was created
4 in 1965, poverty among the elderly has been reduced by nearly
5 two-thirds; by financing health care services, Medicare
6 safeguards beneficiaries and their families from the ruinous
7 costs of medical treatments and prevents individuals from
8 spending unmanageable proportions of their incomes on medical
9 care or being pushed into poverty by their medical bills; in
10 addition, life expectancy has increased by three years and more
11 people are living past the age of 85 than ever before, while
12 disability rates among the elderly are decreasing; with
13 improvements in Medicare coverage for preventive services,
14 such as breast and prostate cancer screening, and advances in
15 care management for people with chronic conditions, further
16 reductions in morbidity and disability can be expected; and

17 WHEREAS, Equally important in assessing Medicare's success
18 is Medicare's cost-effectiveness; Medicare has consistently
19 contained health care costs better than private health plans;
20 analysis of cumulative spending over a 30-year period further
21 illustrates Medicare's ability to control costs over time;
22 Medicare has been able to accomplish this cost-containment
23 record, in part, by using its resources more efficiently,
24 assessing the clinical effectiveness of services when making
25 coverage decisions and when setting payment rates for certain

1 services; and

2 WHEREAS, Medicare's payment structure supports the United
3 States' health system infrastructure; for example, Medicare
4 supports the nation's teaching hospitals and educational
5 opportunities for health care professionals, through enhanced
6 payments; by supporting graduate education for physicians and
7 other providers, Medicare benefits all Americans, whether or
8 not they are covered by Medicare; Medicare also provides extra
9 support to hospitals that serve a disproportionate number of
10 low-income patients and to rural hospitals, which are often
11 more heavily dependent on Medicare reimbursement than other
12 facilities; Medicare also provides enhanced payments to rural
13 health clinics and Federally Qualified Health Centers in
14 medically underserved areas to ensure that care is available
15 for vulnerable people; and

16 WHEREAS, Medicare is the largest single payer for services
17 provided by the 7,000 home health agencies nationwide;
18 moreover, Medicare is an essential part of the entire U.S.
19 economy as well as a pillar of the health system; and

20 WHEREAS, Medicare is simple, popular and reliable; seniors
21 are very satisfied with the Medicare program; Medicare's
22 success is related to the unparalleled choice and availability
23 of physicians and health care services that it offers people;

1 and

2 WHEREAS, Medicare has served Americans well; it is equally
3 available to all seniors and to people with disabilities,
4 regardless of health or financial status, and realizes the
5 right to health care for many of America's most vulnerable
6 individuals; Medicare continues to symbolize a rational, just
7 and systematic approach to health care access for all
8 Americans; and

9 WHEREAS, The enactment of the Medicare Prescription Drug,
10 Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA) has prompted
11 significant changes to the Medicare program; the MMA
12 established a new outpatient prescription drug benefit -
13 Medicare Part D - for people with Medicare coverage, and
14 replaced Medicaid drug coverage with the new Part D program for
15 people who receive health coverage from both Medicare and
16 Medicaid; therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
18 NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
19 celebrate the past 50 years of Medicare and urge the United
20 States Congress to make sure that the millions of seniors and
21 Americans with disabilities who rely on it will be able to
22 enjoy its dependability and simplicity in the years to come;
23 Medicare's successes to date should guide future changes to the

1 program, so that it can continue to ensure access to care,
2 improve quality of life, support the health care system, and
3 enjoy broad support among the people whom it helps every day;
4 and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That strengthening Medicare and improving the
6 Medicare Part D drug program should be a vital part of any
7 reform of the American health care system; and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
9 delivered to President Barack Obama and each member of the
10 Illinois congressional delegation.