

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 19, 2007

The Honorable Leslie V. Norwalk
Acting Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Ms. Norwalk:

We are writing to call your attention to the attached report authored by the National Senior Citizens Law Center (NSCLC). The Medicare program has a duty to effectively serve all beneficiaries regardless of the language they speak. This report raises serious questions about the ability of stand-alone and Medicare Advantage prescription drug plans to effectively communicate with limited English proficient (LEP) beneficiaries.

While the study conducted for this report only looks at California plans, there is little doubt that plans across the country are not meeting the needs of LEP beneficiaries. As you well know, all plans are required to provide multi-lingual call center services. If, as the NSCLC study suggests, plan call centers are not providing sufficient multi-lingual call center services, many plans are likely in violation of their contracts with CMS.

We urge you to review the NSCLC report and conduct an immediate investigation of call centers nationwide to determine whether plans are fulfilling their contractual obligation to provide multi-lingual support to LEP beneficiaries. Please respond to this letter no later than May 3, 2007 with an action plan for your review. In your action plan, please describe how you will work with plans to improve multi-lingual communication, and what types of remedies will be imposed on plans that fail to improve service for LEP beneficiaries.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this issue, which is no doubt having a detrimental impact on millions of LEP Medicare beneficiaries. We look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Pete Stark
Chairman
Committee on Ways & Means
Subcommittee on Health



Xavier Becerra
Member
Committee on Ways & Means
Subcommittee on Health

ENC: