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701 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20004-2694
(202) 737-5980 • (202) 478-5113 (fax)
info@carecontinuumalliance.org
www.carecontinuumalliance.org

The Honorable Member of Congress
Address
Washington, DC Zip Code

Dear Representative X:

On behalf of over 1.8 million Medicare beneficiaries, we urge you to take action before the end of the year to extend congressional authorization for Medicare Advantage Special Needs Plans (SNPs). With health plans having to meet a series of requirements in the near-term that assume contract renewal for 2015, failure to act could put many seniors' health plan choices at risk.

As you know, SNPs serve as a lifeline to beneficiaries with unique and complex care needs. SNPs serve chronically ill seniors and people with disabilities, those who qualify for an institutional level of care, and those who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid. SNPs differ from standard Medicare Advantage plans in that SNPs design individualized care plans with input from beneficiaries and their families, and provide customized benefits that meet individuals' needs. While many pilot programs are underway to test care models for seniors and people with disabilities, SNPs are the *only* stable option that these beneficiaries currently have to meet their complex needs.

Without the specialized care provided by SNPs, many beneficiaries living in the community would have no choice but to enter an institution. Seniors and people with disabilities want and deserve to remain in their own homes or local communities for as long as possible. No one wants to be a burden to others, and SNPs help vulnerable individuals maintain their independence and enjoy a higher quality of life. Numerous data show that SNPs provide a level of care that results in fewer hospitalizations and readmissions, lower costs overall than Medicare fee-for-service, and achieve high beneficiary satisfaction. SNPs continue to grow in popularity among Medicare beneficiaries. Between September 2012 and September 2013, the number of beneficiaries receiving care in SNPs grew 20 percent, from 1.5 million to over 1.8 million.

Created as part of the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003, SNPs were most recently reauthorized as part of the American Taxpayer Relief Act in 2012 as a promise that seniors would have more health care choices. We urge Congress to act today to keep this promise to the more than 1.8 million beneficiaries who rely on SNPs for the care they need. If you have questions, please contact Vicki Shepard at 615-202-2029 or vicki.shepard@healthways.com.

Sincerely,

/signed/

Fred Goldstein
Interim Executive Director

Vicki Shepard
Chair, Government Affairs Committee