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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0911

November 27, 2012

The Honorable Rick Scott
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: Urge swift implementation of higher Medicaid reimbursement rates to primary care physicians per legislative intent

Dear Governor Scott:

I urge you to act swiftly to implement the reimbursement rate increase for Florida primary care doctors under the Affordable Care Act. As a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee that drafted the critical language, the committee's legislative intent was for the increase to be automatic and self-effecting with no provision for you or the state to delay the payment boost. The State of Florida has no legal or rational justification to delay the increase. Indeed, it is in the best interests of Florida families to move as expeditiously as possible per Title X, Subtitle C, Section 1202 of the Affordable Care Act ("ACA").

Florida reimbursement rates to Medicaid doctors have been notoriously low for decades. The unconscionably low rates have deterred talented doctors from serving families and seniors who rely on Medicaid. In turn, without an adequate primary care workforce, the low rates have been a barrier to access to quality health care for Florida children with special needs, newborn babies and many of our older neighbors. Because of this, I helped write the provision in the Affordable Care Act to increase the Medicaid primary care reimbursement rate and have been working diligently with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to fully implement this provision, including the types of doctors that are included in the definition of "primary care."

The increased Medicaid reimbursement rates provided in the ACA are especially beneficial to Florida families - probably more so than just about any other state - and the reason that I fought so hard to have the provision included in the law. It would be a travesty if you allowed our hard-earned tax dollars go to other states. The reimbursement rate increase for primary Medicaid doctors actually is modest, but it is vitally important to improve access to care for children, families and seniors across Florida. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, Florida primary care physicians seeing Medicaid patients receive only about 55 percent of Medicare rates. Many Florida doctors have been unable to treat Medicaid patients due to these extremely low payments, but now there is hope for substantial improvement. The U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services, Kaiser Family Foundation, and others have confirmed that the Medicaid reimbursement rate increase is automatic and requires no state action. This was our clear Congressional intent.

The January 1, 2013, deadline is approaching quickly and the State of Florida needs to prepare for the increase immediately. I have confidence that the State can do so. It is vital to the well-being of Florida children, families and seniors. Implementation of the Affordable Care Act is important to the citizens of the State of Florida and I look forward to working with you and leaders across the State to do so. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me or Elizabeth Brown, my Legislative Director at 813-871-2817 or 202-225-3376.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathy Castor".

Kathy Castor
U.S. Representative
Florida – District 11

Cc: Senator Don Gaetz
Representative Will Weatherford
Senator Chris Smith
Representative Perry Thurston, Jr.