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Kidney patients needed bill's help

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I am a registered nurse, who works with patients diagnosed with kidney disease. There are five stages of kidney disease requiring renal replacement therapy, also known as dialysis. I sent letters to both Florida senators and all 25 Florida representatives requesting them to sponsor SB 635, The Kidney Care Quality and Improvement Act of 2005 and HR 1298, which is the House companion bill, back in July 2005. This bill was recently passed, which will give a 1.6 percent increase of Medicare reimbursement rate, for treatment of patients with kidney failure also known as End Stage Renal Disease.

I would like to thank those who sponsored these bills, Reps. Mark Foley, Michael Bilirakis, Jim Davis, Adam Putnam, Clay Shaw and Robert Wexler. This increase is imperative for quality care and quality of life measures rendered to these patients. Without these provisions, sustained quality improvements are in jeopardy.

There are over 19,000 patients currently receiving dialysis in Florida and unfortunately, that number is expected to grow substantially by the year 2010, which is only four years away. This year alone, more than 400,000 Americans of all ages and from all walks of life will suffer from kidney failure resulting from genetics and medical conditions such as obesity, diabetes and hypertension.

As a kidney patient educator, I look forward to the day when strategies for disease management and prevention are universally observed, but in the meantime, again I applaud members of Congress for acknowledging the need for adequate resources to sustain quality of care for patients with kidney disease.