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Charlie Norwood
9th District, Georgia

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House of Representatives

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February 19, 2004

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Congressional Immigration Reform Caucus
Military Veterans Caucus (Co-Chair)
Nuclear Cleanup Caucus

The Honorable Tommy Thompson
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to express my profound concern and disappointment regarding the implementation of Section 338L of Public Law 107-251, establishing a pilot program to include Doctors of Chiropractic in the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) student loan re-imbusement program. I strongly supported the implementation of this provision of law because I believe that Doctors of Chiropractic can make an important and effective contribution to the delivery of health care through the NHSC and deserve to be included in this important program. While I am pleased that the process of opening up the NHSC to Doctors of Chiropractic has begun, I am very disappointed that only eight (8) doctors of chiropractic have been selected to participate in the pilot program.

I believe it can be fairly concluded that the low number of participants reflects a gross failure by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to expeditiously announce to community health centers (via the *Federal Register* and other means) the existence of the pilot program. In fact, it is a matter of record that Public Law 107-251 was enacted into law many months before HRSA took substantive action to initiate the pilot program. Moreover, at this time, as a new wave of Doctors of Chiropractic are preparing to apply to NHSC in 2004, I am informed that a decision has been made within HRSA to limit the demonstration to only the existing single 'class' of eight (8) chiropractors. Such a narrow view of the demonstration is inconsistent with Congress's clear intent that the chiropractic demonstration should be a statistically significant, comprehensive and multi-year 'test' of the placement of Doctors of Chiropractic in the NHSC and the medically underserved areas it serves.

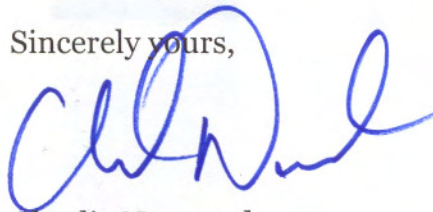
I believe it worth emphasizing again, that out of a large pool of applicants, that included constituents of mine, only eight (8) Doctors of Chiropractic were selected in 2003 to participate in a pilot program that HRSA apparently wants to close to new applicants. This is inconsistent with plans detailed by NHSC staff in early 2003 indicating that thirty-six (36) chiropractors would be included in the program, utilizing the \$3,000,000 appropriated by Congress for this purpose. In fact, only a portion of the funding provided for the NHSC chiropractic demonstration is now being used as Congress intended. This is unacceptable.

Also, it has been suggested to me that tying the placement of doctors of chiropractic to only those locations where a community health center has another provider with prescriptive authority also participating in the NHSC loan reimbursement program has proven to be a serious impediment. Such a requirement serves no useful purpose, and if HRSA does not have the flexibility or regulatory authority to address this particular problem, I will work with my colleagues in the Congress to address this matter through legislation.

I look forward to working with you to eliminate any and all impediments to the full and fair implementation of this NHSC chiropractic pilot program, and to ensure that interested Doctors of Chiropractic will have an opportunity to fill at least the remaining 28 positions in 2004.

I appreciate all that you do in service to America and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Charlie Norwood', written in a cursive style.

Charlie Norwood
Member of Congress