

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Prevent Costly and Devastating Osteoporosis-Related Fractures
Cosponsor the Medicare Fracture Prevention and Osteoporosis Testing Act

April 16, 2009

Dear Colleague,

As Congress continues to debate healthcare reform, including proposals to increase the emphasis on health promotion and disease prevention, it is vital that we address the growing problem of osteoporosis and preventable bone fractures. To accomplish this goal we have introduced H.R. 1894, the **Medicare Fracture Prevention and Osteoporosis Testing Act**. This bill will restore Medicare reimbursements for dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry (DXA) tests and vertebral fracture assessments (VFA) to the 2006 level. According to one study conducted by The Lewin Group, restoring cuts to DXA reimbursement would actually save the government \$1.14 billion over 5 years.

Osteoporosis is a serious condition that remains under-diagnosed and often goes untreated, resulting in serious and costly health consequences. Half of all women and one-fourth of all men over age 50 will experience an osteoporosis related fracture in their lifetime, at a cost of more than \$18 billion per year. In 2004, the U.S. Surgeon General called on Americans to take action to improve their bone health status. Despite this call to action, bone density tests remain underutilized, with fewer than 15 percent of eligible women in Medicare receiving them.

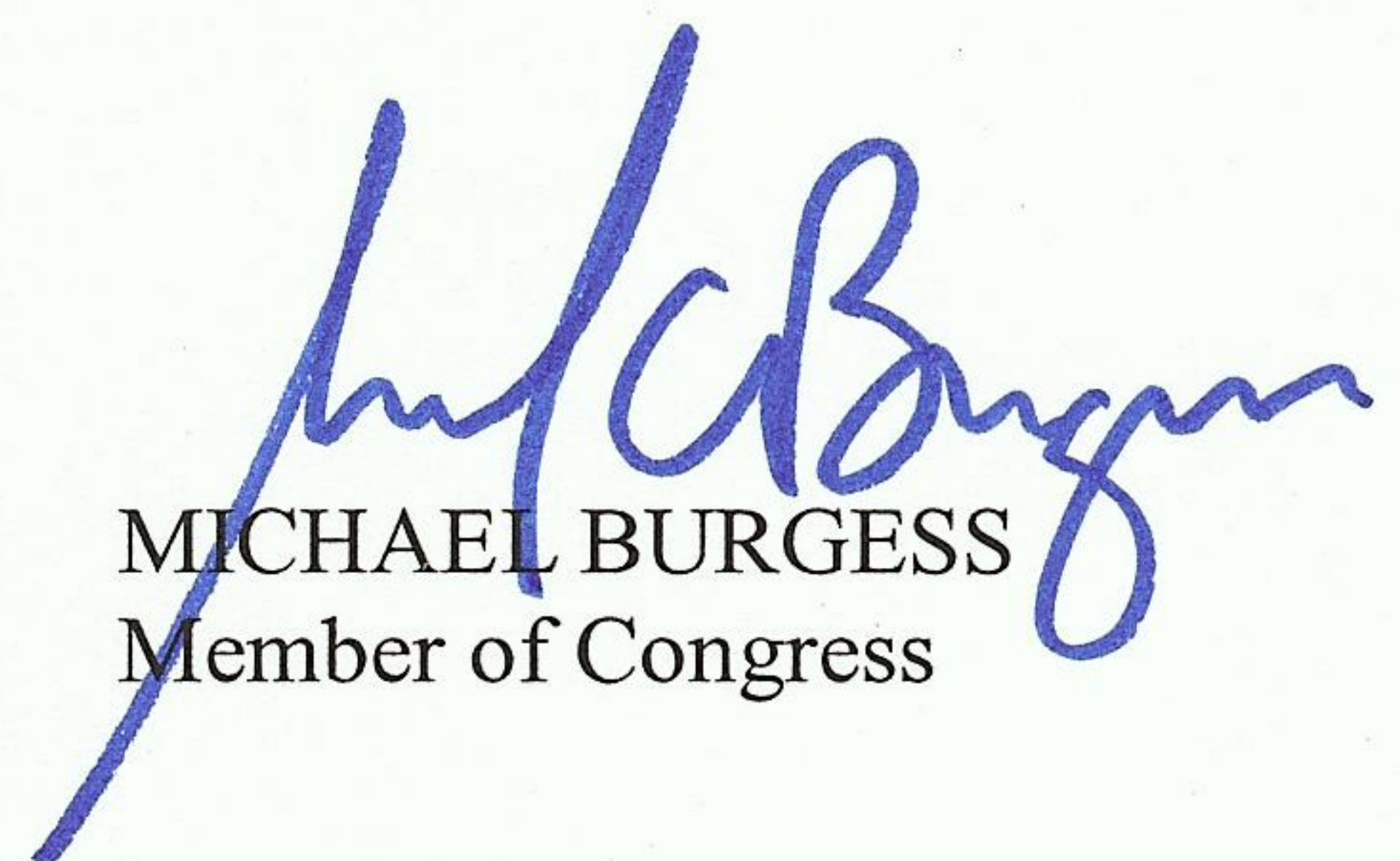
Early diagnosis and treatment of osteoporosis has been demonstrated to dramatically reduce fracture rates and generate substantial savings overall. According to a recently released study of Kaiser Southern California's Healthy Bones Program, increased utilization of DXA testing and subsequent treatment resulted in 37 percent fewer fractures and \$30.8 million in savings in a single year.

Unfortunately, DXA and VFA, two common tests to measure bone mass and predict risk of future fracture, have been subjected to Medicare reimbursement cuts, with even deeper cuts in the works. Reimbursements for DXA scans performed in non-hospital settings have been cut in half and by 2010 they will be cut more than 60 percent below the 2006 level. These cuts will likely result in fewer beneficiaries receiving important diagnostic tests.

We must take immediate action to address the growing osteoporosis crisis. This bill has wide ranging support and has been endorsed by 25 national organizations. If you have any questions or would like to cosponsor the Medicare Fracture Prevention and Osteoporosis Testing Act, please contact Matthew Coffron with Rep. Berkley at 5-5965 or matthew.coffron@mail.house.gov or JP Paluskiewicz with Rep. Burgess at 5-7772 or James.Paluskiewicz@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,


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