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EMILIA D.SANTO, STAFF DIRECTOR
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December 14, 1999

VIA FACSIMILE

(816) 426-3851

Mr. Joe Tilghman
Regional Administrator
Health Care Financing Administration
601 East 12th Street
Kansas City, MO 64106

Dear Mr. Tilghman:

Thank you for meeting with members of my staff and me at your office in Kansas City on November 22, 1999. The meeting was a positive step toward understanding the level and quality of care provided to Missouri's elderly nursing home residents. Your discussion of the serious problem existing in Missouri was appreciated.

Undoubtedly, there is a systemic problem in the nation's nursing homes. The fact that Missouri is no worse than other states does not encourage me. It concerns me that current surveys reveal a spike in the number of "Immediate Jeopardy" violations in Missouri. Moreover, it is simply unacceptable that state surveyors report that one in four Missouri nursing homes have "Actual Harm" deficiencies.

We intend to continue working with you to improve federal oversight of the state nursing home inspection program. As we discussed in Kansas City, we expect to receive monthly reports on the status of Missouri nursing homes, the details of which our respective staff members will work out in the near future.

In addition, initial steps to improve federal oversight have not focused sufficiently on improving the actual quality of care delivered in nursing homes. We expect that more attention will be directed toward enforcement against nursing home operators in Missouri by ensuring that the Missouri Division of Aging aggressively pursues the "bad apples" with serious violations.

Furthermore, the Minimum Data Set (MDS) system you described should provide more reliable information about the quality of care our elderly receive. We support the implementation of MDS

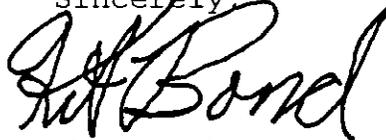
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and believe it may help identify the worst offenders. If the problem is indeed greater than current survey data indicates, we expect to receive that information immediately.

Finally, I was pleased to learn that HCFA is reviewing the contractual agreement with the state of Missouri to determine whether revisions are necessary to ensure that Missouri is meeting the terms and conditions of its contract with HCFA.

Thank you again for your continued cooperation on this very important issue. If you or your staff have any further information or if you have any questions, please contact Dan Donovan at 202-224-5175.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Bond", written in a cursive style.

Christopher S. Bond
Chairman

cc: Nancy-Ann Min DeParle
Administrator
(202) 690-6262

Don Johnson
Deputy Director
Office of Legislation
(202) 690-8168

Thomas W. Lenz
Associate Regional Administrator