MEDICAL CARE

March 17, 1964

Dear:

There has been little question that the government has a role in assuring necessary help to older people in obtaining medical care. The question has been: What should that role be and how should it operate?

I believe existing law affords a humanitarian, fiscally responsible means for such help. Its progress has been rapid despite Administration foot-dragging.

Improvements should, can and will be made. I have personally introduced and supported improvements. Simultaneously I have espoused increasing social security cash payments, especially minimum benefits.

Part of my opposition to the King-Anderson scheme derives from a deep-rooted fear that it would seriously impair the cash social security program. It would require use of social security taxes in a way that would prevent free choice by the individual.

It would be a blank check against social security. No one knows how much it would cost. Clearly it would cost far more than the Administration claims.

The Administration's chief actuary admitted, in recent testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee, that if wages and hospital costs rise as the Labor Department expects, a social security tax increase 100% higher than in the King-Anderson bill would be necessary.

Other witnesses insisted it would be from 200% to almost 400% higher. Independent experts say that even these higher estimates of tax increases might not be enough.

I do not believe the American people are willing to buy such a pig in a poke. Mail from throughout the country supports this belief.

Sincerely,

Everett McKinley Dirksen

Enclosure