June 22, 2015

Senator Orrin Hatch, Chairman
Senator Ron Wyden, Ranking Member
United States Senate Committee on Finance
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Hatch and Ranking Member Wyden:

Thank you for the opportunity to assist the Finance Committee in chronic care reform policy development. On behalf of the undersigned members of the MAPRx Coalition (MAPRx), we respectfully submit that access to needed medications is one of the best ways to improve outcomes for Medicare patients with chronic conditions.

For over 10 years, MAPRx has brought together beneficiary, patient advocacy, family caregiver and health professional organizations committed to improving access to prescription medications and safeguarding the well being of beneficiaries with chronic diseases and disabilities under the Medicare prescription drug benefit (Part D). On behalf of millions of Medicare beneficiaries with chronic conditions who rely on Part D for essential medications, we urge you and the Committee to consider the strengths and weaknesses of Part D, and use lessons learned from this program as you pursue improved outcomes for Medicare patients with chronic conditions.

While not perfect, Part D’s success and popularity suggests that the program is working well for many Medicare beneficiaries. As we enter a new era of healthcare, it is imperative that policymakers and key stakeholders work together to design prescription drug benefit programs that meet the needs of people with chronic diseases and disabilities.

MAPRx urges the Senate Finance Committee to learn from the experience with Medicare Part D - build on its successes and continue to improve on areas where there are still challenges. To that end, we encourage you to use the attached MAPRx Principles for Prescription Drug Benefit Design as a guide for examining Part D. Robust formularies, coverage of the six-protected classes, strong oversight, and transparency for consumers are among the design principles essential to meet the needs of Medicare beneficiaries. In addition, a process for notice of non-coverage, appeals and exceptions is critical to providing access to needed drug therapies.
We also encourage the Finance Committee to examine and improve the benefit. Medicare Part D is by no means perfect. There are challenges that prevent beneficiaries from taking full advantage of the benefits of prescription drug therapy such as gaps in coverage, onerous cost-shifting created by specialty tiers, and restrictive utilization management tools. We also urge you to be attentive to issues related to program effectiveness for beneficiaries receiving low income subsidies.

Thank you for considering our comments. Should you have questions related to MAPRx or the principles, please contact Bonnie Hogue Duffy, MAPRx Coalition convener, at (202) 429-4017 or by email at Bonnie@maprxinfo.org

Sincerely,

Allergy & Asthma Network
American Association on Health and Disability
American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association
Association of Community Cancer Centers
Caregiver Action Network
COPD Foundation
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Epilepsy Foundation
GIST Cancer Awareness Foundation
International Foundation for Autoimmune Arthritis
Lupus Foundation of America
Men’s Health Network
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Kidney Foundation
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Rare Disorders
National Psoriasis Foundation
RetireSafe
Society for Women’s Health Research
The AIDS Institute
The ALS Association
United Spinal Association