



January 13, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leaders McConnell and Schumer, Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

The undersigned members of the MAPRx Coalition are writing to urge your action to reverse an increase in Medicare Part D out-of-pocket (OOP) costs that will occur in 2020. Our group, MAPRx Coalition (MAPRx), is a national coalition of beneficiary, caregiver, and health care professional organizations committed to improving access to prescription medications in Medicare Part D and safeguarding the well-being of Medicare beneficiaries with chronic diseases and disabilities.

Some Part D beneficiaries face a dramatic increase in OOP costs in 2020. Currently, when Medicare Part D beneficiaries reach an OOP threshold, they enter the catastrophic coverage phase where they pay 5% of the cost of the drugs for the remainder of the plan year. Normally, the OOP threshold - the amount patients are required to pay before entering catastrophic coverage - would grow at the rate of beneficiary per capita spending. Due to unintended consequences in the law, the OOP threshold will increase by \$1,250 in 2020. Without action, beneficiaries already facing high OOP spending will see their costs dramatically increase in 2020.

MAPRx is very concerned about how this cliff will impact beneficiaries. Given these beneficiaries already face significant OOP costs, we fear the cliff could drive therapy abandonment. One study of cancer patients showed that 45% of Part D patients abandon their therapy when out-of-pocket costs are as high as Part D plans uniformly require. Another study found that

Medicare patients across a series of disease diagnoses in 2018 were seven times more likely to abandon their first prescription at the pharmacy counter when facing high out-of-pocket costs.

Abandonment of pharmaceutical therapy can worsen patients' health and increase overall health care costs. Conversely, adherence keeps health care costs in check. The Congressional Budget Office in 2012 found that a "1% increase in the number of prescriptions filled by beneficiaries would cause Medicare's spending on medical services to fall by roughly one-fifth of 1%." This connection between prescription drugs and reductions in the use of other medical services - and thus reductions in Medicare A and B spending - highlights the value and importance of adherence to prescribed drugs.

We urge Congress to determine and act on an appropriate solution as soon as possible. Given that the 2020 Medicare Part D plan year already is underway, a retroactive fix is necessary. There is precedent for a retroactive fix for Medicare beneficiaries.

As more Americans become eligible for Medicare, the Part D program will play an increasingly integral role in maintaining beneficiaries' health and reducing overall health care costs. The undersigned members of MAPRx appreciate your attention to this necessary improvement to Medicare Part D. For questions related to MAPRx or the above comments, please contact Bonnie Hogue Duffy, Convener, MAPRx Coalition, at (202) 540-1070 or bduffy@nvgllc.com.

Sincerely,

Allergy & Asthma Network
Alliance for Aging Research
Alliance for Patient Access
ALS Association
American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Kidney Fund
Arthritis Foundation
Caregiver Action Network
COPD Foundation
Epilepsy Foundation
GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer
HealthyWomen
HIV + Hepatitis Policy Institute
International Myeloma Foundation
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Lupus Foundation of America
Men's Health Network
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Council on Aging
National Health Council
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Rare Disorders

National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Psoriasis Foundation
Patient Access Network (PAN) Foundation
Patient Services Inc.
RetireSafe
The AIDS Institute
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research
United Spinal Association
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease