



January 13, 2020

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
520 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bob Menendez
528 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Cassidy and Menendez:

The undersigned members of the MAPRx Coalition are writing in support of your legislation, S.2911, the Seniors Prescription Drug Relief Act of 2019. Our group, the Medicare Access for Patients Rx 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. We greatly appreciate your leadership in advancing policy to help alleviate the financial burden of out-of-pocket (OOP) costs for Medicare Part D beneficiaries.

The Seniors Prescription Drug Relief Act would provide a much-needed “smoothing” mechanism for Medicare beneficiaries to spread payment for Part D out-of-pocket costs across the calendar year, rather than requiring payment at one time as under current law. Under the current benefit design, patients with high upfront costs choose to forego their prescribed medication because the out-of-pocket cost is unaffordable. High out-of-pocket costs often result in beneficiaries not adhering to their prescribed course of treatment or forgoing treatments altogether, resulting in poor health outcomes and higher health care costs.

Making Medicare beneficiary out-of-pocket costs more manageable by spreading them throughout the year would make a real difference for the vast majority of beneficiaries who do not have the resources to pay their entire OOP cap in just a few trips to the pharmacy. A smoothing mechanism would ease the financial strain for Medicare beneficiaries who currently face paying a significant percentage of their total OOP financial burden at the beginning (or first fill) of each benefit year.

MAPRx also strongly supports an annual OOP cap for Medicare Part D to limit the amount Medicare beneficiaries pay for covered prescription drugs. The lack of an OOP cap is one of the biggest challenges for Part D beneficiaries. Individuals with commercial coverage have an out-of-pocket cap for all covered medical care. Most Medicare beneficiaries using the Medicare Part B benefit (outpatient services) also have an out-of-pocket cap since most have some type of supplemental coverage that assists with OOP expenses and/or offers an annual OOP maximum. An annual OOP cap will bring Part D in line with most

other types of insurance as well as help ensure Medicare beneficiaries have access to vital and life-saving medicines. An out-of-pocket cap should be coupled with a mechanism, such as the one in your legislation, that would allow total OOP costs to be distributed more evenly throughout the year. We also support the approach, included in the updated version of the bipartisan Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act, for a cap on the amount of out-of-pocket costs that a beneficiary has to pay in any one month.

Thank you for your leadership on this very important issue. 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 leadership to improve 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@nvglc.com.

Sincerely,

Allergy & Asthma Network
Alliance for Aging Research
Alliance for Patient Access
ALS Association
American Association on Health and Disability
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
Lakeshore Foundation
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Lupus Foundation of America
Men's Health Network
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Council on Aging
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Rare Disorders
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Psoriasis Foundation
Patient Access Network (PAN) Foundation
Patient Services Inc.
Retire Safe
The AIDS Institute
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research
United Spinal Association
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease