



June 6, 2019

House Ways and Means Committee  
House Energy and Commerce Committee

Dear House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard E. Neal, House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Frank Pallone Jr., House Ways and Means Committee Ranking Member Kevin Brady and House Energy and Commerce Committee Ranking Member Greg Walden:

Thank you for your leadership on behalf of Medicare beneficiaries and older adults across the country. Unfortunately, for many patients facing difficult diagnoses, their focus is not “how can I get better,” but instead “how can I afford this treatment.” This reality is detrimental to overall health outcomes and their financial wellbeing, causing untold stress for themselves and their families. There are common sense solutions to help address the problems facing Medicare Part D beneficiaries, which is why we applaud your bipartisan embrace of a cap on patient out-of-pocket spending.

As you may know, more than 43 million Americans rely on the Medicare Part D program to access vital medications needed to treat wide variety of illnesses. Older adults often live with at least one chronic condition, with a large proportion managing multiple diagnoses. When beneficiaries’ out-of-pocket expenses rises above a certain point, known as the “catastrophic threshold” they have already contributed a significant amount of money to their care. Easing the burden on these patients, often our most vulnerable patient populations, is essential to improving health outcomes across the program.

Your proposal to help lower out-of-pocket spending for beneficiaries in the catastrophic phase of coverage is an important step towards helping protect patients from on-going costs. Patients and medical providers have consistently cited the access to a wide range of medications provided through Part D as a key strength of the program. This access gives doctors the tools they need to most effectively tailor treatments to the individual needs of patients. By capping out-of-pocket expenses in the catastrophic phase of coverage your proposed legislation can help Part D beneficiaries better afford both current and innovative medications that can make a difference in the lives of patients.

We also encourage you to consider adding in additional patient protections to ensure that there is no discrimination in plan design or excessive utilization management forced on beneficiaries.

We encourage you to continue your efforts toward practical, patient-centric reforms. The Medicare Part D program has empowered millions of older Americans through high-quality health care. It is a critical program to our overall health care system. By preserving what works, while constantly striving to improve the Medicare Part D program we can more readily secure the care that beneficiaries were promised.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yanira Cruz', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Yanira Cruz, MPH, DrPH  
President and CEO  
National Hispanic Council on Aging