

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 25, 2024

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Chiquita Brooks-LaSure
Administrator
Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra and Administrator Brooks-LaSure:

We write regarding the Calendar Year (CY) Advance Notice for the Medicare Advantage (MA) program to ensure the final rate announcement accurately reflects growth rates and health care cost increases. It is essential for the over 33 million seniors and individuals with disabilities currently enrolled in MA that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) keep payments to the program stable during a time of increased demand for care, as well as the implementation of significant changes stemming from recent rulemaking. Payment stability will ensure that premiums remain affordable, popular supplemental benefits remain intact, and provider reimbursements remain competitive.

We recognize the MA program has undergone changes in recent years, including significant growth due to popularity of the program. However, as we work to improve the overall program, the data and cost assumptions used to project the program's rates must be grounded in the most recent data available and take into account any increased costs that might occur before the rate notice is finalized, either through rulemaking or Congressional action.

As you know, the Advance Notice proposes an effective growth rate of 2.44% when calculating the 2025 benchmark, which does not fully account for the increases in utilization over the past year, in part because it does not include utilization data from the fourth quarter of 2023. We are concerned that the proposed MA growth rate, combined with higher-than-expected utilization, could result in providers receiving lower reimbursement rates for their services, as well as increased premiums or reduced supplement benefits provided to beneficiaries. We urge CMS to closely consider all appropriate data and information, including data indicating higher trends in Q4 2023, to ensure that growth rates in the final Rate Notice reflect recent seniors' expected health care needs in 2025.

Through considering Q4 2023 data, CMS would ensure that the MA program maintains its affordability, benefits, and choices for the program – which now serves more than half of those eligible for Medicare – while improving the quality and long-term stability of the program. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the MA program can continue to effectively serve its enrollees and remain an essential contributor to the health and wellness of America's seniors and those with disabilities.

Sincerely,



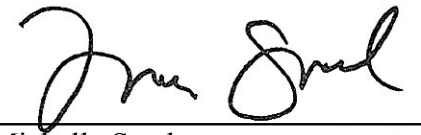
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Member of Congress



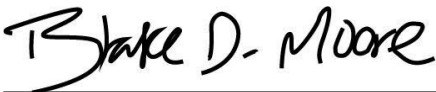
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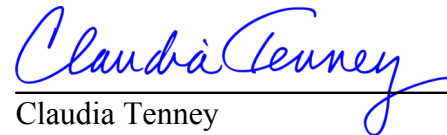
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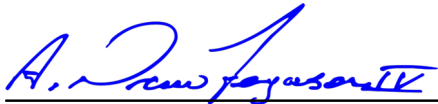
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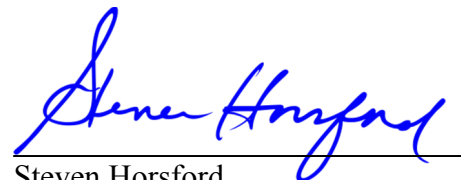
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