



January 29, 2021

The Honorable Norris Cochran
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington D.C. 20201

Dear Acting Secretary Cochran:

On behalf of Allies for Independence, a national nonprofit organization that focuses specifically on long-term services and supports for individuals with disabilities and those who are aging or have chronic illness, we write to express our concern with the Trump Administration proposal, the “Part D Payment Modernization Model Request for Applications for CY 2022.” This proposal, announced on January 19, 2021, permits Part D sponsors participating in the model to waive the six protected class requirement, changing longstanding policy that requires plans include all six protected classes in the formularies.

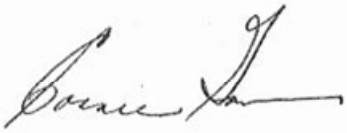
This policy change by the outgoing Administration creates challenges for vulnerable populations who depend on access and flexibility to identify the most effective medications for managing complex conditions. These complex conditions are wide ranging, inclusive of patients with cancer, HIV, epilepsy, or living with mental illness, and the potential disruption could create unnecessary and avoidable consequences. Just as this policy creates challenges for Medicare’s most vulnerable beneficiaries, we are concerned that this policy sets the stage for changes in how state Medicaid programs cover these drugs. This disruption will create further confusion across states for many vulnerable beneficiaries.

We support efforts to reduce spending on prescription drugs, but this policy does not balance the needs of vulnerable populations who depend on access to these protected classes, and could impede progress made by vulnerable populations currently managing their complex conditions. Should this policy change proceed as written, it may have disastrous consequences for vulnerable Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, who are already dealing with reduced access to services posed by the ongoing pandemic.

We call on the Administration to rescind this policy. We look forward working with the Administration and Congress to strike a balance that reduces spending on prescription drugs without jeopardizing access to critical medications.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Connie Garner", is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Connie Garner
Executive Director
Allies for Independence

cc:

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, House Minority Leader
The Honorable Chuck Schumer, Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader