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Dear Members of Congress:

We, the undersigned, are organizations committed to ensuring that older Americans and Americans with disabilities under age 65 have access to good, affordable health care including prescription drugs. We have assisted millions of men and women with Medicare get the health care they need and heard their stories about care they need but cannot afford, particularly prescription drugs. **From this experience, we have learned that a meaningful prescription drug benefit must offer the security of traditional Medicare.**

A meaningful drug benefit must be:

- **Accessible:** Like Medicare Part B benefits, while voluntary, the prescription drug benefit should be automatic, so that people in need are not administratively denied participation.
- **Equitable:** All working Americans pay into Medicare and all eligible Americans should get the same Medicare benefits, including prescription drugs, at the same cost, regardless of income, where they live, or their health condition.
- **Secure and reliable:** Everyone with Medicare who needs drug coverage should get it and be able to count on a reliable benefit from one year to the next.

A low-income benefit will leave millions of older and disabled Americans without coverage for their prescription drugs. Middle-income Americans with high drug costs who are not eligible will be forced to forego their medications or pushed into poverty. Many will suffer, and some will die unnecessarily. Data show that millions of low-income Americans will go without coverage because of the hurdles inherent to the application process. Low-income assistance programs enroll less than two-thirds of eligible individuals, usually administratively disqualifying those in most extreme need. A catastrophic cap on drug spending will not protect people's financial security: a \$4,000 out-of-pocket cap helps 1 in 20 people with Medicare.

A private market benefit will not cover the large majority of people with Medicare; only 11 percent of the Medicare population has chosen Medicare private plans, either because they are unavailable, unreliable and/or unaffordable. Many of those able to join private plans to get drug coverage will be forced to give up their trusted doctors in exchange for some drug coverage. Moreover, "drug-only" insurance policies are neither cost-effective because of high operational costs, nor commercially viable because older and disabled people with Medicare are viewed by industry as bad insurance risks.

We encourage you to pass legislation designed to ensure that everyone with Medicare gets the medications that their doctors prescribe.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Hayes

On behalf of the following organizations:

Action Alliance of Senior Citizens of Greater Philadelphia
Adult Well-Being Services, Detroit, MI
Advancing Independence: Modernizing Medicare and Medicaid
AIDS Action
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Federation of Teachers Program on Retirement and Retirees
Association of Jewish Aging Services of North America
Brooklyn-Wide Interagency Council of the Aging
BWICA Educational Fund, Inc.
California Health Advocates
Care Connections, Boyce, VA
Center for Aging Policy
Center for Health Care Rights
Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.
Center to Advance Palliative Care
Central Coast Commission for Senior Citizens, Area Agency on Aging, Santa Maria, CA
Central Indiana's Area Agency on Aging
Central Maine Area Agency on Aging
Church Women United
Citizen Action of Illinois
Citizen Action of New York
Citizen Advocacy Center
COVE: Community of Vermont Elders
Council of Citizens with Low Vision International
Disabled in Action of Metropolitan New York
Doctors for Global Health
Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, Inc.
Gay Men's Health Crisis
Goddard Riverside Community Center
Gray Panthers
Health SET of Denver, CO
Hummingbird Music Camp, Albuquerque, NM
Iowa Citizen Action Network
Long Island Health Access Monitoring Project
Manhattan Borough-Wide Inter-Agency Council on Aging, Inc.
Maryland Patient Advocacy Group
Massachusetts Senior Action Council
Medicare Advocacy Project, Greater Boston Legal Services, on behalf of its clients
Metro New York Health Care for All Campaign
Minnesota Senior Federation Metropolitan Region
NARCOG Area Agency on Aging, North Central Alabama -- Cullman, Lawrence and Morgan
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare

National Council of Jewish Women
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Mental Health Association
National Senior Citizens Law Center
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
New Hampshire State Committee on Aging
New Jersey Citizen Action
New York Citizens' Committee on Aging
New York Network for Action on Medicare and Social Security
New York StateWide Senior Action Council
New Yorkers for Accessible Health Coverage
Ocean State Action
Older Women's League
Opportunity Resources, Inc.
Oregon Action
Park Meadows Apartments for the elderly
Pathfinder Senior Care Consulting
Pennsylvania Alliance of Retired Americans
Pennsylvania Society for the Advancement of the Deaf
Portland OWL Chapter
Pro Seniors Health Care Consumer Rights Project
Public Citizen
Rockland County Council for Senior Citizens, Inc.
Rockland County Senior Health Care Coalition, NY
Samuel Sadin Institute on Law of the Brookdale Center on Aging of Hunter College
Selfhelp Community Services, Inc., New York, NY
Senior Citizens Law Office, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Senior Journal.com, San Antonio, TX
Southern Tier Independence Center in Binghamton
Tennessee Justice Center
The Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute Mount Sinai School of Medicine NYC
The National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc. (NARVRE)
Thomas Square Apartments for the elderly
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
UNITE AFL-CIO Pennsylvania Retirees Council
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
United Senior Action of Indiana
USAction
Vermont Legal Aid Medicare Advocacy
Vermont Senior Citizens Law Project
Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program
WIN Senior Action Coalition
YWCA East County Senior Services

On behalf of the following individuals:

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