

Caring Ambassadors Program, Inc.

Empowering people to be ambassadors for their health since 1997.

We urge our Oregon delegation to put patients first when working on upcoming healthcare legislation in Congress.

#SenatorRonWyden
#SenatorJeffMerkley
#CongressmanGregWalden
#CongressmanKurtSchrader
#CongressmanPeterDeFazio
#CongresswomanSuzanneBonamici
#CongressmanEarlBlumenauer

October 22, 2019

To the Honorable Oregon Senators and Congressional Delegation:

At a time when drug pricing is a top priority for Congress and the White House, we wanted to share our thoughts on several recent proposals. While some are focused on helping beneficiaries, we have concerns about several proposals that would have little benefit for seniors. Some of the most dangerous proposals being considered would introduce policies taken from foreign governments into our health care system, specifically Medicare Parts B and D, potentially limiting patient access to the medications they need.

For instance, there are proposals being considered that are aimed at instituting international reference pricing and government price controls through inflation penalties or other drug pricing mechanisms. These proposals set dangerous precedents for Medicare beneficiaries by setting prices and dictating the availability of certain drugs, thereby restricting access to vital treatment options. The Medicare program works because seniors and their doctors can craft treatment plans personally tailored to their unique circumstances. If such proposals are enacted, seniors may encounter a narrower set of treatment options or be forced to change medications abruptly, potentially leaving them without access to the full array of medications they need. This is unacceptable to the Medicare beneficiaries in Oregon who rely on the program to access medicines vital to their overall health and wellbeing.

Instead, Congress should focus on proposals that actually benefit patients, like addressing affordability by capping out of pocket costs in Part D and reducing what people pay all year. Unlike other insurance coverage, Part D beneficiaries currently have no cap in what they spend annually. Congress should cap these annual expenses to lower patient cost sharing and improve overall Part D drug affordability.

Lawmakers should also reform our broken rebate system to ensure that discounts for prescription medications go to patients, not middlemen. Passing these savings on to patients will lower out-of-pocket costs at the pharmacy counter and ensure more patients can access and afford their vital medicines. These are tested, realistic ways to address costs in our system and would allow millions of seniors and people with disabilities a lifeline to better manage their health care needs and chronic conditions.

We urge you and your colleagues to stand with seniors by rejecting destructive policy proposals, such as international pricing index and inflation penalties, and others like them. We need common-sense reforms, like capping out-of-pocket costs and passing savings along to beneficiaries, to ultimately bring down costs and preserve the long-term viability and success of the program.

Thank you for your leadership and attention to these important issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lorren Sandt".

Lorren Sandt
Executive Director