

New Jersey Organizational Sign On Letter to Senator Menendez and Representative Pallone: Allow Medicare to Negotiate Lower Drug Prices and Expand Medicare in Budget Reconciliation Bill

September 14, 2021

Dear Senator Menendez and Representative Pallone:

You have a tremendous opportunity to deliver for America's seniors, people with disabilities and people approaching retirement. The undersigned New Jersey organizations representing diverse interests, including consumer safety, public health, business, faith-based, racial justice and labor organizations, are calling on you to ensure that critical improvements and expansion of Medicare are included in the final budget reconciliation package, so that Congress and the Biden administration will deliver on key promises and improve the lives of millions. Specifically, New Jerseyans urge you to include robust Medicare drug price negotiation to lower prescription drug prices for all Americans, to improve Medicare for current beneficiaries by adding dental, vision, and hearing services and capping out-of-pocket costs, and to lower the Medicare eligibility age to at least 60.

The United States spends far more than any other country for pharmaceuticals, and the largest purchaser in the world is the Medicare Part D program. High U.S. drug spending is driven by excessive prices charged by prescription drug corporations, which lead to treatment rationing and preventable negative health outcomes, including death. Enacting a robust system of direct government drug price negotiation and price spike protections that provides relief to patients regardless of medical condition, insurance provider or status will save lives and prevent suffering and financial hardship for families across the nation. Advancing the strongest reform possible is not only the right thing to do in its own right, but stronger reform also has potential to provide greater savings for reinvestment. Conversely, any weakening of drug pricing reform would reduce savings. Bold drug pricing reform will support building a healthier America, as well as produce hundreds of billions of dollars in savings to reinvest in bolstering coverage.

It is also time to enact critical improvements to Medicare's coverage. Given the challenges seniors faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is time to deliver the relief they need. Coming out of the crisis, many seniors will need additional services. Adding an out-of-pocket cap for medical expenses and expanding access to dental, hearing and vision services would go a long way in improving access to needed care.

In addition, by lowering the Medicare eligibility age to at least 60, Congress could deliver crucial progress on expanding health care. Americans approaching retirement age have faced significant job loss as a result of the recession brought on by the pandemic and are at a particular disadvantage in states that have refused to expand Medicaid, leaving low-income Americans in those states particularly at risk of going without coverage and needed care. And given that most people experience increased medical needs as they age, lacking insurance at such a crucial time can mean financial ruin.

Far too many Americans continue to struggle to get the care and medicine they need when they need it. Establishing government drug price negotiations and price spike protections will provide countless

Americans with relief and put an end to treatment rationing. Expanding Medicare to those 60 and older would mean giving the peace of mind that Medicare enrollees already have to an additional 603,000 New Jerseyans and 20 million Americans. Now is the time for action to lower drug prices and improve health care for millions.

Signed:

Atlantic County Our Revolution
Cooper River Indivisible
Cosecha New Jersey
CWA 1037
CWA, District 1
Emgage NY (serves NJ)
Food & Water Watch
Indivisible Cranbury
Indivisible Highland Park NJ
Indivisible NJ 5th District
JOLT USA
Latina Civic Action
Latino Action Network
Latino Coalition of NJ
Lawrence Citizen Activists
Long Valley Indivisible
Make the Road NJ
Monmouth County Democratic Progressive Caucus
Newark Communities for Accountable Policing
NJ 11th For Change
NJ State Industrial Union Council
NJ Universal Health Care Coalition
NJ Working Families Party
NJ21UNITED
North NJ Democratic Socialists of America, Health Care Working Group
Our Revolution - Essex County NJ
Our Revolution Hillsborough
Our Revolution Middlesex
Our Revolution Monmouth
Our Revolution New Jersey
Our Revolution Somerset County NJ
Our Revolution Trenton Mercer
Piscataway Progressive Democratic Organization
Princeton College Democrats
Progressive Democrats of America NJ
Public Citizen
Ramsey Alliance for Social Equity (RASE)

Women for Progress