

BETTER MEDICARE

ALLIANCE

September 13, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Schumer:

Better Medicare Alliance is a community of 160 Ally organizations and more than 600,000 grassroots beneficiary advocates who value Medicare Advantage and the affordable, high-quality, coordinated care it provides to nearly 27 million beneficiaries. Together, our diverse Alliance of community partners, aging service organizations, health plans, provider groups, and beneficiaries share a commitment to ensuring Medicare Advantage is a high-quality, cost-effective option for current and future beneficiaries.

Medicare Advantage has proven its value to seniors and the health care system: delivering a 98 percent consumer satisfaction rate¹, \$1,640 a year in annual beneficiary savings as compared to Fee-for-Service (FFS) Medicare², and a 43 percent lower rate of avoidable hospitalizations than FFS Medicare³. The benefits and consumer savings found in Medicare Advantage are of particular importance, given that Medicare Advantage beneficiaries are proportionally more diverse, lower-income, and display higher rates of social risk factors⁴ than those in FFS Medicare. Nearly half of all eligible Black beneficiaries and 53 percent of eligible Latinx beneficiaries actively choose Medicare Advantage.⁵ Seniors continue to choose Medicare Advantage year over year, and enrollment is at an all-time high. By 2030, the Congressional Budget Office projects enrollment will rise to approximately 51 percent.⁶

As Congress considers reforms to the Medicare program, we believe the addition of dental, vision, and hearing benefits as part of the medical benefit is an important policy change that will benefit millions of seniors and individuals living with disabilities. With more than 42 percent of all Medicare beneficiaries choosing Medicare Advantage for their health coverage, we commend Congress for taking steps to structure the addition of these new benefits to ensure that as the Medicare program is expanded, it is strengthened to benefit all Medicare beneficiaries. This will make certain that those who

¹ <https://bettermedicarealliance.org/news/poll-medicare-advantage-satisfaction-hits-new-high-amid-covid-19-crisis/>

² <https://bettermedicarealliance.org/news/study-medicare-advantage-saves-beneficiaries-1640-year-delivering-40-lower-cost-burden-than-traditional-medicare/>

³ <https://bettermedicarealliance.org/news/new-analysis-medicare-advantage-achieves-better-outcomes-for-high-need-high-cost-beneficiaries/>

⁴ <https://bettermedicarealliance.org/publication/infographic-fact-sheet-medicare-advantage-beneficiary-demographics-2021>

⁵ <https://bettermedicarealliance.org/news/report-half-of-latinx-black-medicare-beneficiaries-choose-medicare-advantage/>

⁶ <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2020-03/51302-2020-03-medicare.pdf>

already receive dental, vision, and hearing through the health plan they chose are not inadvertently harmed with higher out-of-pocket costs, loss of benefits, or other negative impacts.

Consistent with current law and precedent, we urge Congressional leaders to ensure additional benefits are structured in a way that fully reflect the cost of adding dental, vision, and hearing to Medicare in the benchmark calculation. If the cost of providing these benefits is not reflected in the benchmark, Medicare Advantage beneficiaries may see a loss in supplemental benefits. Supplemental benefits are essential in addressing health disparities through innovative efforts aimed at expanding affordable coverage choices for beneficiaries on fixed incomes and improving health equity and clinical outcomes. Benefits addressing vital medical and social needs, including meals, transportation services, physical fitness programs, mental health, in-home care and safety devices, fans for cooling in extreme temperature conditions, respite care for caregivers, wellness programs, and efforts to reduce premiums and lower out-of-pocket costs are at risk.

As an Alliance who strongly supports efforts to expand access to high-quality, affordable care and improve health equity in both FFS and Medicare Advantage, we thank you for your work to ensure any new benefits are designed in a way that strengthens the Medicare program for all beneficiaries, including those who choose Medicare Advantage.

America's seniors and individuals living with disabilities deserve high quality choices to meet their health care needs. We appreciate your commitment to achieving this shared goal and look forward to working with you on these issues.

Sincerely,

Better Medicare Alliance
Agilon Health
Answer Health
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF)
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Austin Geriatric Specialists
Austin Regional Clinic
Buffalo Medical Group
CareMax
Central Ohio Primary Care
ChenMed
ConcertoCare
Consumer Action
Council for Affordable Health Coverage
Direct Primary Care Coalition

Dean Health Plan
Family Care Medical Group
Healthcare Leadership Council
Home Care Association of America
Landmark Health
Lark Health
Metropolitan Area Neighborhood Nutrition Alliance (MANNA)
National Adult Day Services Association (NADSA)
National Association of Health Underwriters (NAHU)
National Hispanic Medical Association
New Jersey State Nurses Association (NJSNA)
Northwell Health
Oak Street Health
Pinehurst Medical Clinic
Pioneer Physicians Network
Podometrics
Point32Health
Population Health Alliance
Preferred Primary Care Physicians
Premier Family Physicians
PriMed Physicians
Prevea Health
Public Sector HealthCare Roundtable
SCAN Health Plan
Signify Health
SilverSneakers by Tivity Health
SNP Alliance
The Coalition of Texans with Disabilities
UPMC Health Plan
VillageMD
Visiting Nurse Service of New York
Wilmington Health