

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Department of Health and Human Services
Attention: CMS-4203-NC
P.O. Box 8013, Baltimore, MD 21244-8013

To Whom It May Concern:

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) must continue to evolve and modernize Medicare Advantage for the millions of diverse seniors and disabled Americans that rely on the program for high quality and affordable health care. Medicare Advantage makes our flawed health care system more equitable, and by strengthening this program, you can continue to progress our country in the right direction. As the President of the International Drop-in Center and a beneficiary of Medicare Advantage, I am writing to you today to ask you to protect and strengthen this essential program to meet the needs of the diverse beneficiaries enrolling in the program.

Along with over 604,000 other Washington residents, I have personally reaped the benefits of Medicare Advantage, including greater savings and more personalized health care treatment. For almost six years, I have participated in this program, and it has become an essential component of my life. Thanks to Medicare Advantage, I have relatively fixed copays and can access health-related resources and care virtually. Like me, many of the seniors I work with at the International Drop-in Center have grown to love this health care program, and I hope that the CMS will keep our best interests in mind by continuing to promote the growth of Medicare Advantage.

At the International Drop-in Center, we are proud to offer a variety of resources and programs to our Washington state Filipino community. Medicare Advantage compliments our services by providing more equitable care to underserved and diverse populations. Since 2013, the number of minority and dually-enrolled beneficiaries in Medicare Advantage plans has [increased](#) by 111 and 125 percent. This massive increase reflects the great desire for a more equitable program like Medicare Advantage in the health insurance marketplace.

While Medicare Advantage is an advantageous program, it is important that you continue to make health care more equitable. Social risk factors [disproportionally](#) impact Black and Latino Medicare Advantage beneficiaries. These groups of individuals report higher rates of food insecurity, lower home-ownership rates, and are less likely to speak English. We desperately need the CMS to modernize and expand upon Medicare Advantage to improve health care outcomes for these beneficiaries.

CMS should continue strengthening this program and ensuring its long-term success for a multitude of reasons. Prior authorization in Medicare Advantage desperately needs to be streamlined, especially for the sake of our historically underserved populations. If or when the *Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act* is passed, CMS can help address the roadblocks in prior authorization by ensuring the smooth and efficient implementation of this law. This Act would simplify prior authorization by modernizing the process, making it easier for all parties involved to share data. By doing so, you can ensure that millions of Americans across the country can continue to access the high-quality care that they receive from their Medicare Advantage plans.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this important matter. I hope CMS will continue its work to enhance this program that is improving health care outcomes for traditionally underserved and overlooked communities.

Sincerely,



Eddie Abellera

###