August 4, 2020

The President
The White House
Washington, DC  20500

Dear Mr. President:

You have an opportunity to take immediate, decisive action that will address the urgent need to expand Americans’ access to COVID-19 and influenza testing and immunization. You can accomplish this by designating pharmacists as providers under Medicare Part B in the next legislative package. The undersigned organizations value the patient care services that pharmacists provide as we strive for beneficial patient outcomes, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 testing and immunization are key aspects of control measures for this terrible pandemic. It is critical to enable all front-line healthcare professionals to provide care in alignment with their training and expertise to improve health outcomes in response to the public health emergency. Expanding people’s access to care from pharmacists will multiply their healthcare access points.

There is strong evidence that team-based care that includes primary care providers, pharmacists, and nurses improves patients’ health.\(^1\)\(^,\)\(^2\)\(^,\)\(^3\) Yet in many parts of the U.S., policy barriers preclude pharmacists from providing or being reimbursed for such care. Like physician practices, hospitals, and other healthcare providers, pharmacists cannot be there for patients without fair and reasonable reimbursement for their services. Congress must recognize pharmacists as providers of billable services to reinforce the meaningful expansion of patient care, especially in underserved or otherwise vulnerable populations.

Over 90% of Americans live within five miles of a community pharmacy,\(^4\) making pharmacists the most widely accessible health care providers. Evidence suggests pharmacists have more opportunities to interact with patients in the community than other providers,\(^5\) however, if action is not taken, the country may not be able to leverage these critical access points to testing and immunizations.

We respectfully urge you to fill the gap by recognizing the full potential of the pharmacist on the patient’s health care team and authorizing pharmacists as providers under Medicare Part B to provide COVID and influenza testing and vaccinations. As the number of COVID-19 cases spike in certain communities across the country and the flu season approaches, the opportunity cannot be missed to ramp up patient access to testing and immunizations.

Sincerely,
Alliance for Aging Research
American Association of Heart Failure Nurses
American Kidney Fund
Association of Black Cardiologists
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
BallengeRx Consulting
Global Liver Institute
HealthHIV
International Cancer Advocacy Network
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association
Mended Hearts
Mended Little Hearts
Men’s Health Network
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Consumers League
National Forum for Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention
National Lipid Association
National Rural Health Association
Partnership to Improve Patient Care
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
RetireSafe
Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine
Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association
WomenHeart

cc:
The Vice President
Ambassador Deborah L. Birx, M.D., Coronavirus Response Coordinator
The Honorable Alex Azar, Secretary of Health and Human Services
The Honorable Seema Verma, Administrator, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
ADM Brett P. Giroir, M.D., Assistant Secretary for Health