

August 21, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell, and Leader Schumer:

We write to request that Congress take immediate action to address the urgent need to expand Americans' access to COVID-19 and influenza testing and immunization by designating pharmacists as providers under Medicare Part B in the next legislative package. We 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.<sup>1,2,3</sup> 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,<sup>4</sup> 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,<sup>5</sup> however, if action is not taken, the country may not be able to leverage these critical access points to testing and immunizations.

We urge Congress 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  
California Chronic Care Coalition  
Chronic Care Policy Alliance  
Coborn's Inc.  
Diabetes Influencers Network  
Global Liver Institute  
HealthHIV  
HealthyWomen  
International Cancer Advocacy Network  
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association  
Mended Hearts  
Mended Little Hearts  
Men's Health Network  
Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors  
National Consumers League  
National Forum for Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention  
National Lipid Association  
National Rural Health Association  
Nevada Chronic Care Collaborative  
Partnership to Improve Patient Care  
PharmaSmart International  
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association  
RetireSafe  
Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine  
Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association  
WomenHeart

cc:

The Honorable Chuck Grassley, Senate Finance Committee Chairman  
The Honorable Ron Wyden, Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member  
The Honorable Frank Pallone, House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman

The Honorable Greg Walden, House Energy and Commerce Committee Ranking Member

The President

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

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<sup>1</sup> Guide to Community Preventive Services. Cardiovascular Disease: Team-Based Care to Improve Blood Pressure Control.

<https://www.thecommunityguide.org/findings/cardiovascular-disease-team-based-care-improve-blood-pressure-control>. Released April 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Guide to Community Preventive Services. Diabetes Management: Team-Based Care for Patients with Type 2 Diabetes.

<https://www.thecommunityguide.org/findings/diabetes-management-team-based-care-patients-type-2-diabetes>. Released December 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Guide to Community Preventive Services. Cardiovascular Disease: Tailored Pharmacy-based Interventions to Improve Medication Adherence. <https://www.thecommunityguide.org/findings/cardiovascular-disease-tailored-pharmacy-based-interventions-improve-medication-adherence>. Released April 2019.

<sup>4</sup> NACDS Face to Face with Community Pharmacies, RX IMPACT, Drug Store News, March 2016, p. 23; accessed August 1, 2020 at [https://www.nacds.org/pdfs/DSN\\_RxIMPACT2016.pdf](https://www.nacds.org/pdfs/DSN_RxIMPACT2016.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Berenbrok LA, Gabriel N, Coley KC, et al. Evaluation of frequency of encounters with primary care physicians vs. visits to community pharmacies among Medicare beneficiaries. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2020;3(7):e209132. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.9132.