



October 15, 2019

Dear Kansas Congressional Delegation,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and the thousands of Kansans we represent, we are contacting you today to share our thoughts regarding the current debate on drug prices. Specifically, we want to weigh in on various proposals being considered that would significantly change Medicare Part D and Part B, some of which could risk altering these highly successful programs.

As you may be aware, Medicare Part D provides prescription drug coverage to more than 533,000 beneficiaries in Kansas. Since implementation in 2006, the program has consistently come in below Congressional Budget Office estimates as well as monthly premiums for enrollees that are nearly 50% below projections. Perhaps most importantly, annual satisfaction surveys show more than 85% of beneficiaries say their plan is working well.

Despite these positive outcomes for seniors and those relying on Medicare, various proposals threaten to drastically alter the program risking access to new treatments and changing our healthcare system to look and operate more like those in Germany or Japan. Introducing an inflation penalty into Part D is simply a fancy term for government price-setting and could severely restrict access to innovative therapies.

Another disastrous idea for patients and providers in rural areas of Kansas would be to use international price indexing for Part B medications. Cutting reimbursement levels for cancer, arthritis and other injectable medications based on prices in Greece and Australia could mean fewer medication choices or having to travel further to access care.

However, there are some ideas being discussed that could provide real relief for patients at the pharmacy counter. Our drug supply chain is complex and confusing, often leaving patients paying the price – literally – at the pharmacy counter. Congress should work to reform the rebate process, so patients see the benefit of those manufacturer discounts at the point of sale rather than the middlemen who take them as enormous profits. Additionally, creating an out of pocket cap and lowering what people pay in Part D will provide predictability for many Kansans who live on a fixed income.

We share your concerns with making sure patients can access the medications prescribed by their physicians and often affordability is an access issue. We feel strongly there is a right-way and wrong-way to lower prescription drug prices as outlined above. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Stroke Foundation

Kansas State Grange

BioKansas

NAMI Kansas

BioNexusKC