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April 30, 2020

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

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

On behalf of Patient Access Network (PAN) Foundation and the patients and families we support, I write to thank you for your leadership during these unprecedented times and to urge you to address out-of-pocket costs for Medicare beneficiaries related to COVID care and treatment in the next relief package. Congress has an important opportunity to address the high out-of-pocket costs that are a significant barrier for too many older and disabled Americans in accessing medically-necessary care they need during this global pandemic.

Founded in 2004, PAN is a non-profit organization whose mission is to help underinsured people with life-threatening, chronic, and rare diseases get the medications and treatments their physicians prescribe for them by providing financial assistance for their out-of-pocket costs and by advocating for improved access and affordability. PAN provides patients with direct assistance through nearly 70 disease-specific programs and also collaborates with national patient advocacy organizations to provide patients with education and additional support. Since 2004, nearly one million underinsured patients have received financial assistance from the Foundation.

In early April, 2020, PAN established a program to offer financial assistance to Americans with serious illnesses who have COVID-19 or are quarantined because of the virus. Eligible Medicare beneficiaries receive a \$300 grant for COVID-19 treatment costs, prescription and over-the-counter medications, medical supplies and other important expenses, including transportation to medical appointments and groceries, meals and food delivery services. In just a few weeks, we have helped 1,500 patients.

While we appreciate that there is no cost sharing for COVID-19 testing and a future vaccine and that some Medicare Advantage plans have voluntarily waived co-pays for COVID treatment related expenses, more must be done to address costs to patients for COVID care and treatment.

Therefore, we urge the following provisions be included in the next COVID-19 relief package for the duration of the public health emergency:

- **Hold Medicare beneficiaries harmless for specified COVID-19 treatment services furnished under Part A or Part B of the Medicare program.** Establish a zero cost-sharing (out-of-pocket costs) for COVID-19 treatment under Medicare Parts A and B.
- **Cover treatments for COVID-19 at no cost sharing under the Medicare Advantage program.** Establish zero cost-sharing (out-of-pocket costs) for COVID-19 treatment under Medicare Advantage.
- **Require coverage under Medicare prescription drug plans (PDPs) and MA-PDPs, without the imposition of cost sharing or utilization management requirements, of drugs intended to treat COVID-19 during certain emergencies.** Require Part D PDPs to include on their formularies any outpatient drug that has been authorized, approved, or licensed to treat COVID-19. In addition, prohibit Part D plans from requiring copayments, coinsurance, or OOP costs for this treatment or use prior authorization, step therapy, or any other utilization management tools before covering this therapy.

More than 15 million older adults live on incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level, and 4.7 million live below poverty. For economically vulnerable Medicare beneficiaries, the impact of increased OOP costs due to COVID-19 now and in the future will present added burdens on top of their existing struggles to afford needed healthcare. These older adults, many of whom are living with life-threatening, chronic and rare diseases, will find it increasingly difficult to afford out-of-pocket costs for their treatment.

Therefore, we urge you to also consider legislation to lower out-of-pocket costs for prescription medications for Medicare beneficiaries. Two policy solutions will help greatly: a cap on Medicare Part D and smoothing legislation to evenly distribute costs throughout the calendar year.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and thank you for your efforts in seeking solutions to increase access to health care for more Americans during this public health emergency. If you would like further information or have questions, please contact Amy Niles, Executive Vice President (aniles@panfoundation.org, 202/661-8073).

Sincerely,



Dan Klein, MHS
President and Chief Executive Officer
Patient Access Network Foundation