



805 15th Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20005 T 202-347-9272

February 16, 2021

The Honorable Ben Cardin
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cardin:

On behalf of Patient Access Network (PAN) Foundation and the patients and families we support, I write to express our support for the *Medicare Dental Benefit Act (S. 97)*. PAN lauds your leadership in reintroducing this important legislation for seniors, ending the statutory exclusion of dental care in Medicare. This is long overdue, as is the creation of a specific dental benefit in Medicare Part B.

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 by providing financial assistance for out-of-pocket costs and advocating for improved access and affordability. PAN provides patients with assistance through nearly 70 disease-specific programs and collaborates with national organizations to provide patients with education and support services. Since 2004, nearly one million underinsured patients have received financial assistance from the Foundation.

Medicare does not generally cover dental care, which can make dental procedures unaffordable for seniors. Two-thirds of Medicare beneficiaries lack oral health coverage, and 49% of Medicare beneficiaries have not seen a dentist in the last 12 months (as of 2017). All too often, limited or no dental insurance coverage can result in high out-of-pocket costs (OOP) or foregone oral health care. High OOP costs are a barrier to dental care as more than 15 million older adults live on incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level, and 4.7 million live below poverty. Forgoing dental care, however, can worsen underlying conditions. Untreated cavities and gum disease can exacerbate certain diseases, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and lead to chronic pain, infections, and loss of teeth. By creating a specific dental benefit in Medicare, millions of beneficiaries on fixed incomes will be able to maintain their oral health that is critical to their overall health.



We look forward to working with you to ensure the *Medicare Dental Benefit Act* becomes law. If you would like further information or have questions, please contact Amy Niles, Executive Vice President (aniles@panfoundation.org, 202/661-8073).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Klein".

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

cc: The Honorable Sherrod Brown
The Honorable Jeff Merkley
The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
The Honorable Bob Casey