

July 10, 2023

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

Dear Senator Cardin:

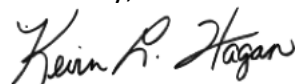
On behalf of Patient Access Network (PAN) Foundation and the patients and families we support, I write to express our support for the *Medicare Dental Benefit Act* (S. 2012). PAN lauds your leadership in reintroducing this important legislation for seniors, ending the statutory exclusion of dental care in Medicare. This is long overdue, as is the creation of a specific dental benefit in Medicare Part B.

PAN is an independent, national 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to helping federally and commercially insured people living with life-threatening, chronic, and rare diseases with the out-of-pocket (OOP) costs for their prescribed medications. PAN provides patients with direct assistance through more than 70 disease-specific programs and collaborates with national patient advocacy organizations to provide patients with education and additional support. Since 2004, we have helped more than 1 million underinsured patients.

As you know, the Medicare program covers a majority of all Americans age 65 and older and plays a vital role in the quality and longevity of their lives. However, the program has also long fallen short in providing those beneficiaries with sufficient coverage for essential oral and dental treatment. 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).<sup>i</sup> A recent study found that use of dental services fell at age 65 for both enrollees in traditional fee-for-service and Medicare Advantage.<sup>ii</sup> As a result, medical problems and treatment that can be proactively addressed with such care have instead gone unchecked, delayed, or cancelled, resulting in serious clinical, human, and fiscal implications. 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.

The PAN Foundation appreciates your commitment to expanding access to dental care that is critical to overall health. We welcome the opportunity to work with you to advance this important bill and be a resource to you. Please don't hesitate to contact Amy Niles, Chief Advocacy and Engagement Officer at [aniles@panfoundation.org](mailto:aniles@panfoundation.org).

Sincerely,



Kevin L. Hagan  
President and Chief Executive Officer

cc: The Honorable Richard Blumenthal  
The Honorable Edward Markey  
The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
The Honorable Sherrod Brown

<sup>i</sup> Kramarow EA. Dental care among adults aged 65 and over, 2017. NCHS Data Brief, No 337. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2019. Accessed at: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db337.htm>.

<sup>ii</sup> Simon, L. Song Z., and Barnett, M. Dental Services Use: Medicare Beneficiaries Experience Immediate And Long-Term Reductions After Enrollment, Health Affairs, Vol. 42, No. 2 February 2023.

<https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2021.01899>