

R IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Finance Committee Members Express Bipartisan Concerns Over Proposed Medicare Rule**

*Urge CMS to Ensure Drug Coverage Stays Accessible, Comprehensive and Affordable*

WASHINGTON – In a letter today, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and Ranking Member Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, were joined by 18 colleagues in urging Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Administrator Marilyn Tavenner to reconsider changes proposed for the Medicare Part D prescription-drug program.

“The Medicare prescription drug program – strengthened by the Affordable Care Act – is working for seniors. While this new Medicare proposal provides additional tools to prevent fraud and abuse among drug prescribers, the uncertainty and potential disruption is too great to ignore,” **Wyden said**. “The Administration should press pause and redouble efforts to guarantee seniors’ drug coverage remains accessible, comprehensive and affordable.”

“Given its impact on seniors, what CMS has proposed for Medicare’s prescription drug program needs to be fully reconsidered,” **said Hatch**. “I’m pleased so many of my colleagues joined us in supporting this effort and look forward to working with CMS on a more prudent path forward.”

Last month, the administration proposed wide-ranging changes to the Medicare Part D prescription-drug program which provides affordable access to necessary prescription drugs for over 36 million Medicare beneficiaries, including eleven million seniors who lacked comprehensive coverage prior to the program’s construction.

The letter was also signed by John D. Rockefeller, D-W.V., Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, Bill Nelson, D-Fla., Pat Roberts, R-Kan., Robert Menendez, D-N.J., Michael Enzi, R-Wyo., Thomas Carper, D-Del., John Cornyn, R-Texas, Michael Bennet, D-Colo., John Thune, R-S.D., Robert Casey, D-Penn., Richard Burr,

R-N.C., Mark Warner, D-Va., Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., Rob Portman, R-Ohio, and Patrick Toomey, R-Penn.

The text of the letter to Administrator Tavenner is below:

The Honorable Marilyn Tavenner  
Administrator  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Administrator Tavenner,

We write you to express our strong objections to the 2015 MA and Part D Proposed Rule that was published in the Federal Register on January 10, 2015. We have serious concerns that the proposed rule would disrupt care for millions of Part D beneficiaries and unnecessarily interfere with a successful program.

In the ten years since its enactment, Medicare Part D has proven to be a stable and strong public-private health care partnership. Part D provides affordable access to necessary prescription drugs for over 36 million Medicare beneficiaries, including eleven million seniors who lacked comprehensive coverage prior to the program's construction. Beneficiary satisfaction currently exceeds 90%, and average beneficiary premiums have been stable at about \$30 in the past four years.

Part D has also exceeded budgetary expectations with the Congressional Budget Office repeatedly reducing its estimates of the program's cost, which is now roughly 45% below initial projections. The competitive bidding model established by Congress and overseen by CMS to guarantee beneficiary protections and access while containing costs has been a resounding success. Such an accomplishment can be attributed to the fact that Part D recognizes the unique needs of Medicare beneficiaries, and allows plan options to be tailored to those needs while maintaining the foundation of the program: drug coverage should be accessible, comprehensive and affordable.

Given this remarkable success, we are perplexed as to why the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) would propose to fundamentally restructure Part D by requiring immediate, large-scale changes to the program that have direct consequences for beneficiaries. Many of the proposed changes are untested and unstudied and could result in significant loss of beneficiary choice, access, and consumer protections.

Therefore, we strongly oppose the implementation of these proposals. Instead, we urge you to begin a new dialogue with Congress, Medicare beneficiaries, and relevant stakeholders on how best to achieve the universal goal of a sustainable and successful Part D program.

Sincerely,

WYDEN  
HATCH  
ROCKEFELLER  
GRASSLEY  
STABENOW  
CRAPO  
NELSON  
ROBERTS  
MENENDEZ  
ENZI  
CARPER  
CORNYN  
BENNET  
THUNE  
CASEY  
BURR  
WARNER  
ISAKSON  
PORTMAN  
TOOMEY

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