

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement by Medicare Rights Center President Joe Baker on the Release of the Medicare Trustees Report

New York, NY— The good news is that the report once again confirms that the Affordable Care Act helps Medicare's financial outlook, but the report still demonstrates that Medicare's finances may need further strengthening. Before today's release is converted into political talking points and sound bites about the sky falling, it is important that Americans understand that Medicare will not suddenly go bankrupt and run out of money on a certain doomsday date. The real threat to Medicare are proposals, like those included in the House Budget Resolution, that convert Medicare into a premium support or voucher program or other proposals that undermine the availability of guaranteed benefits and affordable coverage to those with Medicare.

We must remember that Medicare is not the problem. The problem is growing costs in the health care sector overall, and shifting costs to beneficiaries does nothing to address this issue and leaves access to medically necessary services in question. People with Medicare already spend three times more than the non-Medicare population on health care. Given that the median income of Medicare beneficiaries is \$25,000 per year, paying more for care is not an option for many.

Instead, we must look for solutions, like those included in the Affordable Care Act, that eliminate waste and reform our delivery system or allow Medicare to get better prices on drugs and services. These are policies that achieve savings without cutting benefits or increasing consumer costs. The purpose of preserving Medicare and shoring up the program's finances should be to maintain the value of the benefit and the financial and health protections that the program provides to the people it serves and their families.

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Medicare Rights Center is a national, nonprofit consumer service organization that works to ensure access to affordable health care for older adults and people with disabilities through counseling and advocacy, educational programs, and public policy initiatives.

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