



July 18, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

On behalf of the Medicare Rights Center, I am writing to affirm our commitment to maintaining the Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) of 2018's Part D donut hole reforms that will improve the health and economic security of people with Medicare and their families.

The Medicare Rights Center is a national, nonprofit 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. Our organization provides services and resources to nearly three million people with Medicare, family caregivers, and health care professionals each year.

From our experience assisting people with Medicare, we know that prescription drug affordability is an ongoing challenge. Every day on our National Consumer Helpline, we hear from older adults and people with disabilities who are struggling to cover their drug costs. The BBA of 2018 will help ease this burden by closing the Part D donut hole one year earlier and by providing beneficiaries in the coverage gap with a higher discount on their prescription drugs. This higher discount will allow beneficiaries to move through the donut hole more quickly, lowering their out-of-pocket costs and ensuring they can better access needed care.

We applaud these important reforms, and urge you to reject efforts that would roll back this progress or otherwise shift costs onto beneficiaries. Most people with Medicare simply cannot afford to pay more for health care. In 2016, half of all beneficiaries lived on less than \$26,200, and one-quarter had annual incomes below \$15,250.¹ Accordingly, any changes to current law must make prescription drugs more affordable and accessible for people with Medicare—not less.

¹ Jacobson, Gretchen, et al.; Kaiser Family Foundation. "Income and Assets of Medicare Beneficiaries, 2016-2035" (April 21, 2017), <https://www.kff.org/medicare/issue-brief/income-and-assets-of-medicare-beneficiaries-2016-2035/>

We look forward to working with you to advance and protect policies that achieve these goals. For additional information, please contact Lindsey Copeland, Federal Policy Director, at lcopeland@medicarerights.org or 202-637-0961. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Baker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joe" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Baker".

Joe Baker
President
Medicare Rights Center

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