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August 14, 2015

The Honorable Dick Durbin
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
2367 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin and Representative Schakowsky:

On behalf of the Medicare Rights Center, I am writing to express support for the *Medicare Prescription Drug Savings and Choice Act of 2015* (S. 1884 & H.R. 3261). We commend this effort to simplify the administration of Medicare Part D and to improve the beneficiary experience. This legislation is particularly important as the Medicare program celebrates its 50th anniversary.

The proposed legislation would create one or more Medicare-administered prescription drug plans, with a uniform premium and a vetted formulary designed to ensure safety, appropriate use, and high value care. Adding a public drug benefit to the Part D program would diminish confusion among beneficiaries who now must navigate a complicated maze of private health plans and year-to-year formulary changes. In addition to enhancing beneficiary choice, a Medicare-administered plan has the potential to create federal savings through simplified administrative procedures.

At the same time, the legislation adds to the tools available to the federal government to control the cost of prescription drugs in Medicare. Under current law, the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services is expressly prohibited from negotiating Medicare prescription drug prices. Private health plans alone bear the responsibility of negotiating with prescription drug manufacturers. Authorizing the Secretary to negotiate, coupled with a public Part D benefit, has the potential to bring down prescription drug prices.

In addition to strengthening the long-term sustainability of the Medicare program, lower pharmaceutical prices could enhance the financial security of people with Medicare through reduced premiums and cost-sharing. Saving on the cost of prescription medications would be particularly meaningful to the more than 25 million older adults and people with disabilities—half of the Medicare population—living on annual incomes of \$23,500 or less.

We also welcome the opportunity created by the legislation to improve the Medicare Part D appeals process. The current system is riddled with administrative barriers that cause many people with Medicare to forego filling needed prescriptions. A streamlined, more transparent appeals system is needed to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries have access to medically necessary medications.

For these reasons, we strongly support the Medicare Prescription Drug Savings and Choice Act of 2015. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

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

Joe Baker
President
Medicare Rights Center