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September 4, 2020

The Honorable Bob Casey
United States Senate
393 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Casey and Senator Warren:

On behalf of the Medicare Rights Center, thank you for your efforts to examine the impact of U.S. Postal Service (USPS) policy changes on people with Medicare.

The 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. Medicare Rights provides services and resources to three million people with Medicare, family caregivers, and professionals each year.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, 17% of people with Medicare who used their Part D prescription drug coverage in 2018—around 7.3 million people—had at least one medication delivered via USPS.¹ Data from the first seven months of 2020 shows significant increases in the use of mail-order pharmacies compared to 2019, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.² As a result, millions of Americans currently rely on USPS for timely delivery of their medications.

Any USPS operational changes that result in delivery delays could put these individuals at risk. Such interruptions could hinder their access to needed therapies, potentially leading to the abandonment of medications, reduced adherence to treatment protocols, worse health outcomes, and higher costs.

There are also health, safety, and financial risks for Part D enrollees who may attempt to avoid these complications by switching from mail-order to a local retail pharmacy. The burden of transferring a prescription falls on the beneficiary, and it can be an onerous and time-

¹ Cubanski, Juliette; et al., Kaiser Family Foundation, "Mail Delays Could Affect Mail-Order Prescriptions for Millions of Medicare Part D and Large Employer Plan Enrollees" (August 20, 2020) <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/mail-delays-could-affect-mail-order-prescriptions-for-millions-of-medicare-part-d-and-large-employer-plan-enrollees/>.

² *Id.*

consuming process. It requires the individual to investigate and weigh any changes to cost and convenience, and to work with their provider, plan, and pharmacy to ensure their needs are met—all before they run out of their current prescription fill. Those with multiple mail-order medications may need to do this several times.

Switching to a brick-and-mortar pharmacy may not even be an option for many enrollees, including people with limited mobility, transportation issues, and specialized or compounded drug needs. In addition, people with Medicare are generally at increased risk from COVID-19.³ They may feel unsafe obtaining their prescriptions in person and may not have access to a local pharmacy with affordable home delivery or curbside pickup options.

Preserving and improving reliable mail-order medication delivery is critical. Doing so would help empower people with Medicare to choose what works best for them, by guaranteeing the availability of meaningful options. We urge you to ensure that current and future USPS initiatives actively support the health, independence, and financial security of older adults, people with disabilities, and their families.

Sincerely,



Fred Riccardi
President
Medicare Rights Center

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "People at Increased Risk" (Updated August 10, 2020) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html>.