

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 2, 2019

Dear Colleague:

In celebration of Medicare's 54th Anniversary this week, we write to remind you of how this program continues to providing value to 64 million older adults and people with disabilities, and to invite you to partner with us on advancing legislation that strengthens traditional Medicare.

On July 30, 1965, in Independence, Missouri, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Medicare program into law. Since that time, this essential program has drastically improved the lives of older Americans. Before the passage of Medicare, 30 percent of older Americans lived in poverty, only half had health insurance, and most of those with insurance only had coverage for inpatient hospital costs. Expanded to cover individuals with disabilities in 1972, Medicare has helped ensure economic security for millions. Today, nearly 99 percent of older adults have health coverage, and more than 90 percent live above the poverty line. Medicare and Social Security serve as bedrock investments that people pay into over the course of their lives, enabling them to live and age with dignity.

Thanks to investments and advancements in public health, Americans live longer today than they did in 1965 by an average of nearly a decade. Now, we need to make comparable investments into traditional Medicare to support people as they age longer. It is time to extend the same out-of-pocket limit and guaranteed issue protections granted to those with private insurance under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to traditional Medicare, and ensure guaranteed issue of Medigap policies for all Medicare eligible individuals. Benefits like hearing, vision, and dental should be a fundamental part of the program – not extra benefits at extra out-of-pocket cost.

The 64 million individuals who rely on Medicare have kept up their end of the contract – paying into the program over the course of their working lives. Our constituents rely on us to keep our promises and hold up our end of the bargain and ensure traditional Medicare remains strong and sustainable. It is time to modernize traditional Medicare so that it can continue to provide value to its current and future enrollees.

This Congress, several dozen pieces of legislation – many of them bipartisan – have been introduced by a number of our colleagues to improve Medicare and give our constituents additional choice and support. We invite you to join us in strengthening the Medicare program by supporting some or all of the bills¹ listed below:

- **S. 22**, the Medicare Dental Benefit Act
- **S. 62**, the Empowering Medicare Seniors to Negotiate Drug Prices Act
- **S. 286**, the Mental Health Access Improvement Act
- **S. 296**, the Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act
- **S. 475**, the Reducing Existing Costs Associated with Pharmaceuticals for Seniors Act (RxCAP) Act

- S. 691, the Medicare Extra Rx HELP Act
- S. 753, the Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act
- S. 1190, the Rural Access to Hospice Act
- S. 1280, the Beneficiary Enrollment Notification and Eligibility Simplification (BENES) Act
- S. 1423, the Medicare and Medicaid Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefit Act
- S. 2428, the Medigap Consumer Protection Act

For years, Congress has acted to strengthen and add benefits to the Medicare Advantage program, neglecting to take the same opportunities to strengthen traditional Medicare, on which the majority of people with Medicare across the country to depend. We invite you to work with us to modernize and strengthen the entire Medicare program for our nation's older adults and individuals with disabilities.

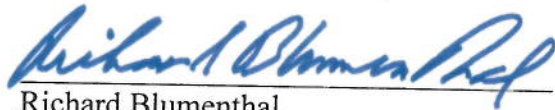
Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

¹ This list is not exhaustive of all legislation introduced in the 116th Congress to strengthen Medicare. For additional information on pending legislation, please contact Senator Brown's staff at Abigail_Duggan@brown.senate.gov.