March 25, 2019

The Honorable Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator  
503 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
United States Senator  
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ben Cardin  
United States Senator  
509 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins  
United States Senator  
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

Our organizations, representing millions of American providers, patients, and consumers, write today in strong support of the **Removing Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening Act, S. 668**. We applaud you for sponsoring this important legislation and for your leadership in the fight against colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among men and women combined in the United States. In 2019, it is estimated that 145,600 Americans will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer and approximately 51,000 Americans will die from it.

Over 1,700 organizations, including many of the organizations on this letter, have committed to eliminating colorectal cancer as a public health problem and are working toward the shared goal of reaching 80 percent screened for colorectal cancer in every community for whom screening is recommended. This legislation will get us closer to this worthy goal.

Under current law, Medicare covers a screening colonoscopy for beneficiaries without any cost-sharing. However, Medicare requires seniors pay a 20 percent coinsurance if polyps are found and removed during that screening. Removing precancerous polyps during a colonoscopy can prevent cancer, making colonoscopies a unique preventive service, but there is no way to know if you have polyps (and will incur cost-sharing) until after the colonoscopy is completed.

This coinsurance requirement can cause seniors to wake up to a surprise bill of as much as $350, which can act as a serious deterrent to this lifesaving cancer screening. Importantly, those who have private insurance do not face this same cost barrier. Enactment of the **Removing Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening Act** would fix this inequity in Medicare and remove the coinsurance requirement for a screening colonoscopy.

It is critically important that Medicare-eligible seniors be screened for colorectal cancer. Approximately 60 percent of cases and 70 percent of deaths due to colorectal cancer occur in those aged 65 years and

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2 Ibid.
4 Cost estimates provided by the American Gastroenterological Association.
Colonoscopies are proven to prevent and detect colorectal cancer at earlier stages when treatment is more effective and can save lives. The five-year relative survival rate for colorectal cancer is only 14 percent when caught at a later stage. If caught at an early stage with screening, the survival rate improves to 90 percent.

The Removing Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening Act, S. 668, will help ensure that everyone on Medicare has access to lifesaving colorectal cancer screening, regardless of their ability to pay. Again, we commend you for sponsoring this legislation, and look forward to working with you to advance it in the 116th Congress.

Sincerely,

AARP
Academy of Oncology Nurse and Patient Navigators
AliveAndKickn
Alliance for Aging Research
Ambulatory Surgery Center Association
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Gastroenterology
American College of Preventive Medicine
American College of Radiology
American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer
American Gastroenterological Association
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
Association of Oncology Social Work
CancerCare
Cancer Support Community
Chronic Disease Coalition
Colon Cancer Alliance for Research and Education for Lynch Syndrome (CCARE Lynch Syndrome)
Colon Cancer Coalition
Colorectal Cancer Alliance
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation
Digestive Disease National Coalition
Fight Colorectal Cancer
FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered
GI Cancers Alliance
Kiel Colon Cancer Foundation
Lutheran Services in America
Lynch Syndrome International

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8 Ibid.
Michael's Mission
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Patient Advocate Foundation
Prevent Cancer Foundation
Raymond Foundation
The Colon Club
United Ostomy Associations of America, Inc.
Washington Colon Cancer Stars