

CANCER LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

A PATIENT-CENTERED FORUM OF NATIONAL ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS
ADDRESSING PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES IN CANCER

August 5, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schumer and Senator McConnell:

The undersigned cancer patient, health care professional, and research organizations are writing in support of the patient-centered reforms of Medicare Part D and the Affordable Care Act enhanced advanced premium tax credit provisions that are included in the Inflation Reduction Act.

Cancer patients have benefited significantly from more effective screening and early diagnosis of cancer and advances in the treatment of cancer. The significant public and private investment in cancer research and the pioneering researchers across all sectors have produced therapeutic advances that are transforming the lives of cancer patients. Unfortunately, improvements in cancer treatments have not been comparable across all cancers, and even those with access to effective therapies may experience serious side effects of cancer and cancer treatment, including financial toxicity.

Cancer patients with Medicare Part D insurance that covers certain cancer therapies may never fill their prescriptions for life-saving therapies or may not complete the prescribed course of treatment because their cost-sharing responsibilities are unmanageable.¹ Many cancer patients with insurance find that, in addition to the life-altering disruptions that cancer and cancer treatment cause, they emerge from cancer treatment with their lives upended by medical debt.²

¹ Dusetzina SB. Your money or your life – the high cost of cancer drugs under Medicare Part D. N Engl J Med 2022; 386; 2164-66.

² Reporter Noam Levey details lives “upended” by medical debt in the Diagnosis: Debt series undertaken by Kaiser Health News and National Public Radio. The first installment in the series is Kaiser Health News, 100 million people in America are saddled with health care debt, June 16, 2022. Accessed on August 4, 2022: <https://khn.org/news/article/diagnosis-debt-investigation-100-million-americans-hidden-medical-debt/>.

We are struggling as a nation to ensure that cancer patients have access to high-quality and affordable care.

We commend the inclusion of provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act that address some of the issues that confront cancer patients and compromise their access to high-quality and affordable care. Medicare Part D cost-sharing protections and continuation of enhanced advanced premium tax credits will assist cancer patients and many others in their quest for affordable health care. Much more must be done to ensure an affordable and equitable health care system, but these provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act are important steps forward.

Medicare Part D

We are pleased that Congress is poised to set an annual out-of-pocket cap of \$2,000 in Medicare Part D and to permit smoothing of these costs throughout the plan year. An annual spending cap of \$2,000 is an important improvement in Part D plan design, but cancer patients may find that they owe that amount in their first prescription fill of the year. Those cancer patients may struggle to meet that cost-sharing on a single prescription, making the smoothing provision critical.

When this provision is enacted, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services must implement the new annual cap and the smoothing provision in such a way that beneficiaries are fully aware of the smoothing protection and how to trigger it for their own benefit.

Enhanced Advanced Premium Tax Credits

Although we are making strides in reducing the rate of uninsured Americans, many still struggle to afford the premiums for adequate health insurance. The American Rescue Plan Act addressed this issue for some Americans by expanding eligibility of advanced premium tax credits (APTCs) to those over 400 percent of the federal poverty level and reducing the share of income that an individual must contribute to premiums. The American Rescue Plan Act provisions will end with the 2022 plan year unless Congress extends the APTCs. We support the three-year extension of the enhanced APTCs included in the Inflation Reduction Act.

Although the Medicare Part D and enhanced APTCs provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act will not eliminate the financial toxicity of cancer care that many cancer patients experience, they are actions that will help many cancer patients and others with serious and life-threatening illnesses requiring significant treatment accompanied by significant costs.

Thank you in advance for your efforts to protect the Medicare Part D and enhanced APTC provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act and to ensure that consumers enjoy the protections they offer.

Sincerely,

Cancer Leadership Council

Academy of Oncology Nurse & Patient Navigators
Cancer Support Community
Children's Cancer Cause
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
LUNgevity Foundation
Lymphoma Research Foundation
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance
Prevent Cancer Foundation