



Statement for the Record

House Committee on Energy and Commerce

Comments Regarding Provisions of the Budget Reconciliation Pursuant to S. Con. Res. 5

February 11, 2021

Our 32 organizations, representing millions of patients and consumers across the country who face serious, acute, and chronic health conditions, write to urge the House Energy and Commerce Committee to advance important provisions that would help support the health and wellbeing of the American public while also slowing the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Together, we represent more than 120 million people with pre-existing conditions in the United States, many of whom have increased risk of infection and/or adverse health outcomes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made abundantly clear that all people need access to adequate and affordable health insurance coverage now more than ever. Research has demonstrated that access to comprehensive health insurance means access to timely, medically necessary health care. If someone without health insurance today contracts the COVID-19 virus, they may be forced to make the difficult decision to not be tested and treated due to fears about the cost of care. That puts our entire society – particularly the people we represent – at risk.

We are therefore pleased to see that the Energy and Commerce Committee has taken substantive steps to include policies in the reconciliation package that will positively impact patients and consumers.

Medicaid Provisions

Medicaid is critical for patients with and at risk of serious and chronic health conditions, and we are pleased to see the Committee include policies that would incentivize Medicaid expansion, improve COVID-19 vaccine coverage in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), allow states to extend coverage for postpartum women for up to 12 months, increase funding for home and community-based services, and increase federal matching funds for certain populations.

The expansion of Medicaid coverage to all individuals with incomes below 138% of the federal poverty level would extend quality and affordable coverage to at least 4.3 million uninsured adults living in states that have not yet expanded, according to recent estimates, and it is likely that the number of people in the coverage gap has grown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Medicaid expansion also plays an important role in addressing health disparities; for example, one recent study found that states that expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act reduced racial disparities in timely treatment for cancer patients.

We applaud the Committee for taking these important steps to bolster and expand this critical program at a time when Americans need it most.

COVID-Related Public Health Provisions

Experts agree that access to testing, treatment, vaccines, and recovery services are the most important part of slowing and stopping the spread of COVID-19. We appreciate the work that has been done so far, especially passage of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (H.R. 6201) to ensure that testing and vaccines are no-cost to individuals, regardless of their health care coverage. We feel that this legislation continues to build on the policies included in previous packages and applaud the Committee's work to support access to vaccines, therapeutics, testing, and mental health services.

Our organizations appreciate the work of the Energy & Commerce Committee to advance the health and wellbeing of the patient populations we represent during the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge the Committee to pass the above provisions and advance them to the House floor. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation.

Signed:

Alpha-1 Foundation

ALS Association

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

American Diabetes Association

American Heart Association

American Kidney Fund

American Lung Association

Arthritis Foundation

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

Cancer Support Community

CancerCare

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

Epilepsy Foundation

Family Voices

Hemophilia Federation of America
Immune Deficiency Foundation
March of Dimes
Mended Hearts & Mended Little Hearts
Muscular Dystrophy Association
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Health Council
National Hemophilia Foundation
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Rare Disorders
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Psoriasis Foundation
Pulmonary Hypertension Association
Susan G. Komen
The AIDS Institute
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
United Way Worldwide
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease