



For Immediate Release

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Patient and Beneficiary Groups in MAPRx Coalition Urge Supercommittee to Protect Medicare Part D

*Those with Most at Risk Call on Leaders to Resist Proposals That Would Erode Protections That
Ensure Access to Broad Prescription Drug Formularies*

September 29, 2011 (Washington, DC)—Writing on behalf of millions of Medicare beneficiaries with chronic health conditions who rely on Part D for their essential medications, 26 members of the Medicare Access for Patients Rx (MAPRx) coalition sent a joint letter urging members of the joint deficit panel (“supercommittee”) to reject proposals to increase Medicare beneficiary cost-sharing, raise coinsurance, and freeze income thresholds as they seek ways to reduce federal spending. If enacted, such proposals could cause many Part D beneficiaries – particularly those with chronic conditions that require high-cost drugs or biologics – to face severe financial hardship and/or forego necessary treatment, ultimately driving up costs in other parts of the Medicare program. The letter is available [here](#) [PDF].

“We recognize the pressures facing the supercommittee, but we cannot risk the health and well-being of people with chronic conditions, especially for short-term Part D savings that will result in higher total health care costs,” said Sandra C. Raymond, President and CEO of the Lupus Foundation of America. “We urge the supercommittee to resist these proposals and ensure that the Part D program can continue to serve Americans with lupus and other chronic conditions most in need of access to prescription drugs.”

Writing to the supercommittee, the organizations highlighted the successes of the program, which has served as a lifeline for millions of beneficiaries by providing access to previously unaffordable prescription drugs. This access has improved health outcomes, saving money in other Medicare components by reducing doctor and hospital visits, preventing acute illness, and avoiding other costly health problems.

“The Medicare Part D drug benefit has been an extreme success for millions of people with serious illnesses, including thousands of people with HIV/AIDS, who depend on a lifetime daily course of medications to keep them healthy,” said Carl Schmid, Deputy Executive Director of The AIDS Institute, a MAPRx member. “Increasing costs for Medicare beneficiaries, who frequently are on a number of medications, could quickly place these lifesaving drugs out of their reach, which will certainly lead to severe illness.”

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Policies that place greater financial burdens on beneficiaries have the potential to undermine much of the Part D program's success. A recent report by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that half of the total Medicare population has an income below twice the federal poverty level – \$22,000 for an individual – and “even those with higher incomes often struggle to make ends meet.”

MAPRx brings together beneficiary, patient advocacy, family caregiver and health professional organizations committed to improving access to prescription medications and safeguarding the well-being of beneficiaries with chronic diseases and disabilities under the Medicare prescription drug benefit (Part D). For more information, visit www.maprx.info.

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