

Smarter Health Care Coalition

July 02, 2021

The Honorable Anna Eshoo
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy and commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Eshoo and Ranking Member Guthrie:

On behalf of the Smarter Health Care Coalition (the Coalition), we are writing to express strong support for the bipartisan H.R. 1978, the **Protecting Seniors Through Immunization Act of 2021** and **H.R. 2170, the Helping Adults Protect Immunity (HAPI) Act**. We urge Congressional leadership to enact this critical legislation, to reduce consumer confusion and improve coverage of high-value immunizations for all Americans. The Coalition represents a broad-based, diverse group of health care stakeholders, including consumer groups, employers, patients, health plans, life science companies, provider organizations, and academic centers.

A key area of focus for the Coalition is ensuring patients have access to high-value health care services, including vaccines. Each year, 50,000 adults in America die from vaccine-preventable diseases (not including COVID-19 deaths).¹ Cost-sharing can limit the use of vaccines that would prevent these deaths. Additionally, vaccines are one of the most cost-effective ways to improve population health and the efficiency of the U.S. healthcare system, which currently spends \$27 billion treating vaccine-preventable diseases.² The cost of and access to vaccines is also a matter of health equity. As demonstrated by COVID-19, seniors and low-income individuals are particularly vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases. Widespread access to vaccines without cost-sharing should be a top policy priority.

The Coalition supports **H.R. 1978, The Protecting Seniors Through Immunization Act of 2021**, which would require Medicare beneficiaries to have access to all recommended vaccines without additional out-of-pocket costs. Currently, some vaccines are covered under Medicare Part B or Medicare Part D. Vaccines recommended by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's

¹ Capito, Hirono, Whitehouse, Scott Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Increase Seniors' Access to All CDC-Recommended Vaccines: U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia. (2021, March 24). Retrieved from <https://www.capito.senate.gov/news/press-releases/capito-hirono-whitehouse-scott-introduce-bipartisan-bill-to-increase-seniors-access-to-all-cdc-recommended-vaccines>

² Assessing the Cost of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases. (2019, December 23). Retrieved from <https://www.ajmc.com/view/assessing-the-cost-of-vaccinepreventable-diseases>

(CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) must be covered without cost-sharing in Part B, but these rules do not apply to Part D cost-sharing. Part D covered vaccines include important immunizations for shingles and Tdap. The legislation would require all ACIP-recommended vaccines, current and future, to be covered without cost-sharing. Not only will this legislation reduce unnecessary financial barriers, but it will also educate seniors on vaccine coverage.³

Further, the Coalition also supports **H.R. 2170, the HAPI Act**, which would eliminate out-of-pocket costs for vaccines among the categorically eligible adults in traditional Medicaid. Currently, beneficiaries enrolled in Medicaid expansion programs receive vaccines with zero cost-sharing, but categorically eligible adults (such as pregnant women) enrolled in traditional Medicaid do not. The HAPI Act will help to make coverage more consistent for anyone who needs a vaccine, regardless of how they are covered. Additionally, the HAPI Act reimburses states that vaccinate at-risk, hard-to-reach patient populations.⁴ We support efforts to close disparities in vaccine access.

Both bills make vaccines more accessible and coverage more consistent across public and private health plans, which substantially improves clarity for consumers. We hope this will also make it easier for trusted health care professionals, like family physicians, to increase vaccination rates. Combined, these bills build upon the legacy of provisions like Section 2713 of the Affordable Care Act, one of the most popular provisions of the law, which guarantees coverage for preventive services (including ACIP-recommended vaccines) without cost-sharing in commercial plans.

The Coalition supports these bills which align with our mission to lower barriers to high-value care, specifically for populations experiencing the greatest need. The Smarter Health Care Coalition greatly appreciates the work of the subcommittee to make it easier for Medicare and Medicaid recipients to access the care they need to stay healthy, and we encourage you to enact this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Andrew MacPherson, Ray Quintero, and Katy Spangler
Co-Directors, Smarter Health Care Coalition

³ Capito, Hirono, Whitehouse, Scott Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Increase Seniors' Access to All CDC-Recommended Vaccines: U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia. (2021, March 24). Retrieved from <https://www.capito.senate.gov/news/press-releases/capito-hirono-whitehouse-scott-introduce-bipartisan-bill-to-increase-seniors-access-to-all-cdc-recommended-vaccines>

⁴ Soto Introduces Bill to Help Ensure Zero-Out of Pocket Costs for Vaccines. (2020, November 20). Retrieved from <https://soto.house.gov/media/press-releases/soto-introduces-bill-help-ensure-zero-out-pocket-costs-vaccines>

CC:

House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman, Representative Frank Pallone, Jr.

House Energy and Commerce Committee Ranking Member, Representative Cathy Rodgers