

Dear Members of the Alabama Congressional Delegation:

March 2, 2021

We are writing to express serious concerns about changes announced in the last days of the Trump administration that will hurt patients with the most complex health conditions and limit their access to treatments that work best for them. We ask you to stand with patients and urge the Biden administration to rescind these changes.

If allowed to proceed, the Part D Payment Modernization Model will create significant changes to Medicare prescription drug coverage starting in 2022. Changes to Medicare Part D's six protected classes – anticonvulsants, antidepressants, antineoplastics, antipsychotics, antiretrovirals and immunosuppressants – could be especially devastating to many of the people we serve.

These protections are critical to people with epilepsy, mental illness, HIV, and cancer, as well as those who have received organ transplants. Many of these patients can be successfully treated with medications, but what works well for one patient may not work for another. Patients need access to the full range of treatment options and particularly the treatments that are working for them. Many patients with these chronic conditions have literally gone through years of trial and error to find the best treatments.

Because of the need for individualized treatments for these complex conditions, Medicare Part D plans have been required from the beginning to cover essentially all medications in the six protected classes. The changes announced by the Trump administration would remove protections from five of the classes in 2022 and HIV medications in 2023. In addition, plans would be allowed to cover only one drug on the formulary in each class, less than the current standard of two drugs per class throughout Part D.

These changes will be uniquely harmful to patients struggling with chronic illnesses that are already difficult to treat.

Changing the model will not lower patients' out-of-pocket drug costs. But forcing patients to use a medication that is covered rather than one that actually addresses their needs will come at a heavy price for individuals as well as our community as a whole. When their illnesses are poorly managed, these patients are more likely to be hospitalized, may be less able to work and take care of their families, and in the case of HIV, may have an increased chance of spreading the virus.

It's critically important for all of us that patients have access to medications that work for them. Please encourage the Biden administration to protect the integrity of the Medicare Part D program and its six protected classes and to stop the Part D Payment Modernization Model from moving forward.

Sincerely,

AIDS Alabama
Alabama Cancer Association
Alabama Council for Behavioral Healthcare
Alabama Rare
ALS Alabama
Behavioral Healthcare Alliance of Alabama
Brenda's Brown Bosom Buddies

Epilepsy Foundation of Alabama
Medical Advocacy and Outreach
NAMI Alabama
Rural Health Medical Program
6:52 Project Foundation
Survivors Cancer Action Network
Wings Across Alabama

