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November 29, 2022

The Honorable Roger Marshall, MD
United States Senate
479A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maggie Hassan
United States Senate
324 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for S. 5117, the Medicare & You Handbook Improvement Act of 2022

Dear Senators Marshall and Hassan:

I write on behalf of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI or Academy) to thank you for introducing **S. 5117, the Medicare & You Handbook Improvement Act of 2022**. The Academy supports S. 5117, which seeks to improve Medicare beneficiary education by updating materials shared during the open enrollment period for seniors to make more informed decisions on health plan selection.

Established in 1943, the AAAAI is a professional association with over 7,000 members in the United States, Canada and 72 other countries. This membership includes allergist/immunologists (A/I), other medical specialists, allied health, and related healthcare professionals—all with a special interest in the research and treatment of patients with allergic and immunologic diseases.

The AAAAI commends your bipartisan leadership in introducing this important legislation to help seniors make the best decision about their Medicare plans and understand how utilization management tools, like prior authorization, would impact prescription drug coverage under certain plans. S. 5117 would improve beneficiary education by requiring the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to update the Medicare & You handbook to include: a description of utilization management techniques, including prior authorization, how a beneficiary can find which techniques apply under a specific Medicare Advantage (MA) plan or prescription drug plan; a description of the network sizes of MA plans relative to the number of health care providers who accept Original Medicare; and information related to seniors switching from MA plans back to Original Medicare and the potential raises in premiums and prohibition they may face in purchasing supplemental coverage.

(more)

The current prior authorization process is overly burdensome, requiring medical providers and staff to dedicated hours of administrative time in negotiating with a patient's insurance companies to preapprove certain medications that prescribers have deemed to be medically necessary to properly treat patients. The Academy appreciates the legislation's provisions to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries are aware of potential pitfalls in plans, and how certain utilization management tools, like prior authorization, would impact their access to medications. This complements previously introduced legislation, *the Improving Seniors Timely Access to Care Act* (H.R. 3173/S. 3018), which would make strides in reforming the current prior authorization process for MA programs to ensure patient access to the most appropriate medications in a timely manner.

Thank you for your continued leadership to ensure our nation's seniors have further information to select a health plan to best meet their healthcare needs. As issues related to allergies, asthma, and immunological disorders arise, I encourage you to contact Sheila Heitzig, JD, MNM, CAE, AAAAI Director of Practice and Policy, at (414) 272-6071 or sheitzig@aaaai.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Khan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David A. Khan, MD, FAAAAI
President, American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology