

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 21, 2020

The Honorable Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Administrator Verma:

We write to express our strong opposition to the President's transparent attempt to use your office and taxpayer dollars to influence the upcoming presidential election. On September 24, President Trump announced a plan to send taxpayer-funded "drug discount cards" to Medicare beneficiaries.¹ This \$8 billion proposal would provide a subsidy to the pharmaceutical industry but would do nothing to lower prescription drug prices.

According to recent reporting, you and other members of the Trump Administration have spent the days following the President's announcement scrambling to implement the plan prior to Election Day.² Taking \$8 billion from the Medicare Trust Fund, which finances vital health care services for tens of millions of elderly and disabled Americans, to fund a political stunt is unacceptable.

President Trump has repeatedly promised and failed to lower prescription drug prices for the American people. In January 2016, then-candidate Trump said that Medicare could save hundreds of billions of dollars by negotiating drug prices with pharmaceutical companies.³ In January 2017, President-Elect Trump even went as far as to say that pharmaceutical companies are "getting away with murder".⁴ He never followed through.

In December 2019, the House of Representatives passed legislation to empower the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate lower prescription drug prices. H.R. 3, the *Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act*, would:

- Allow the federal government to negotiate lower drug prices, making those lower prices available to those on Medicare and those with private insurance
- Stop pharmaceutical companies from charging Americans an average of nearly four times more for the same drugs that they sell in other countries for less⁵
- Create an annual limit on out-of-pocket drug costs for Medicare beneficiaries
- Add dental, hearing, and vision benefits to Medicare
- Increase the number of seniors who qualify for financial assistance to pay for prescription drugs

President Trump opposes H.R. 3, and has not proposed any alternative plan that would allow the federal government to negotiate lower drug prices. Now, with less than a month to go before Election Day, you are pursuing a desperate, taxpayer-funded plan that would do nothing to address the underlying reason why prescription drug prices are so much higher in the United States than in other countries: the federal government is prohibited from negotiating with pharmaceutical companies.

¹ New York Times: "Trump Promises Drug Discount Cards as an Expensive Pre-election Gift" (September 24, 2020)

² Politico: "Health officials scrambling to produce Trump's 'last-minute' drug cards by Election Day" (October 8, 2020)

³ Stat News: "Donald Trump says Medicare should negotiate drug prices" (January 26, 2016)

⁴ Reuters: "Trump says pharma 'getting away with murder,' stocks slide" (January 11, 2017)

⁵ Ways and Means Majority Staff: "A Painful Pill to Swallow: U.S. vs. International Prescription Drug Prices" (September 2019)

We urge the Trump Administration to finally support a plan that would allow the federal government to negotiate lower prescription drug prices and to suspend your \$200 gift card stunt.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

_____/s_____
Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress

_____/s_____
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

_____/s_____
Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

_____/s_____
John B. Larson
Member of Congress

_____/s_____
Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

_____/s_____
Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress

_____/s_____
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

_____/s_____
Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress

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Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

_____/s_____
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

_____/s_____
Judy Chu, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

_____/s_____
Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress

_____/s_____
Mike Doyle
Member of Congress

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Peter Welch
Member of Congress

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Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

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Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress

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Doris Matsui
Member of Congress

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Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

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Darren Soto
Member of Congress

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Deb Haaland
Member of Congress

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Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

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David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

_____/s_____
Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress