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December 5, 2023

The Honorable Jason Smith, Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
1011 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith:

On behalf of the more than 2 million members of the National Retiree Legislative Network (NRLN), I am requesting that you call for votes in the Committee on Ways and Means on the following three bills:

H.R.4895, Lowering Drug Costs for American Families Act. On average, Americans pay more than three times as much as people in other developed countries for brand name prescription drugs—sometimes as much as 600 percent. **H.R. 4895** would reduce the burden on patients and taxpayers and lowers drug costs for individuals who are covered by private health plans. The legislation:

-- Extends the historic drug price negotiation program to all individuals with private coverage. This includes over 164 million workers and their families who get health coverage through their jobs and more than 16 million individuals with Marketplace coverage.

-- Stops drug companies from raising prices faster than inflation by ensuring that the inflation rebates enacted under the Inflation Reduction Act also apply to individuals covered by private health plans.

-- Strengthens the drug price negotiation program to deliver more savings to Americans by increasing the annual number of prescription drugs selected for negotiation from 20 to 50.

H.R.5526, Seniors' Access to Critical Medications Act of 2023 would make permanent a waiver issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that allowed for Medicare patients to receive critical medications by mail or allow for caregivers and family members to obtain medications for them.

During the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE), CMS allowed independent physicians to mail medications directly to their patients or have them delivered by a family member or caregiver, if a Medicare patient was unable to be present in the office. CMS has ruled that the end of the COVID-19 PHE marks the end of such policies. Consequently, many patients in need of critical medicines lack the means to receive their prescriptions in a timely manner from their healthcare provider.

This legislation would allow for patients to have medications delivered to them via the mail, or by those overseeing their care.

H.R.5958, Drug Price Transparency for Customers (DTC) Act of 2023 would require price disclosures on advertisements for prescription drugs, in order to empower patients and reduce spending on medications. The Government Accountability Office recently released a report on the impact of direct-to-consumer advertising which found that prescription drugs advertised directly to consumers account for 58 percent of Medicare's spending on drugs.

Studies show that these activities steer patients to more expensive drugs, even when a patient may not need the medication or a lower-cost generic is available. This practice drives up the cost of health care, while undermining the role of providers. Studies show that patients are more likely to ask their doctor, and ultimately receive a prescription, for a specific drug when they have seen ads for it. For these reasons, most countries have banned DTC prescription drug advertising—the United States and New Zealand are the only developed nations to permit this practice.

If you would like to learn more about why NRLN supports these bills, please contact me or Alyson Parker, NRLN Executive Director in Washington, DC, at parkerstrategies@gmail.com or call 813-545-6792.

Sincerely,



Bill Kadereit, President

National Retiree Legislative Network

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