

August 22, 2016

The Honorable Orrin Hatch  
Chairman, Committee on Finance  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Ranking Member, Committee on Finance  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin Brady  
Chairman, Committee on Ways & Means  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sander Levin  
Ranking Member, Committee on Ways & Means  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Fred Upton  
Chairman, Committee on Energy & Commerce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy & Commerce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hatch, Ranking Member Wyden, Chairman Brady, Ranking Member Levin, Chairman Upton, and Ranking Member Pallone:

As former Administrators of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services/Health Care Financing Administration, Republicans and Democrats, we frequently disagree among ourselves about any number of issues. But we all agree on the importance of treating Medicare beneficiaries fairly, efficiently, and as helpfully as possible. That's why we have come together in support of the bipartisan Beneficiary Enrollment Notification and Eligibility Simplification (BENES) Act (S. 3236 and H.R. 5772).

Many of the problems addressed by the BENES Act did not exist when most of us were in the government, but the decoupling of eligibility ages for Medicare and full Social Security benefits, revisions to Medicare Secondary Payor law, and the growing number of Americans working past the age of 65 have, together, substantially complicated the decision making process for eligible individuals and couples in deciding when and how to enroll in Medicare.

Signing up for Part B is not a straightforward task, particularly for the increasing share of Americans who are working longer and delaying retirement. For these individuals, knowing when and whether to enroll in Part B requires understanding complex and varied rules. Enrollment missteps are a common occurrence and often lead to a lifetime of higher Part B premiums. In 2014, 750,000 people with Medicare were paying a Part B Late Enrollment Penalty (LEP) and the average LEP amounted to nearly a 30 percent increase in a beneficiary's monthly premium.<sup>1</sup> Gaps in coverage, higher health care costs, and limited access to needed care are also consequences experienced by those who make honest enrollment mistakes.

To prevent costly enrollment errors among people new to Medicare, the BENES Act provides enhanced notice and education for those approaching Medicare eligibility, aligns and simplifies Part B enrollment periods, and updates existing mechanisms for those seeking reprieve from Part B premium penalties and coverage delays. We encourage you to support the BENES Act.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> P. Davis, "Medicare: Part B Premiums," (Congressional Research Service: August 2016), available at: <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R40082.pdf>

Sincerely,

Leonard D. Schaeffer  
Administrator  
Health Care Financing Administration  
1978 – 1980

William L. Roper, MD, MPH  
Administrator  
Health Care Financing Administration  
1986 – 1989

Gail R. Wilensky, Ph. D.  
Administrator  
Health Care Financing Administration  
1990 – 1992

Bruce C. Vladeck, Ph. D.  
Administrator  
Health Care Financing Administration  
1993 – 1997

Nancy-Ann DeParle  
Administrator  
Health Care Financing Administration  
1997 – 2000

Tom Scully  
Administrator  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
2001 – 2004

Mark McClellan, MD, Ph. D.  
Administrator  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
2004 – 2006

Donald M. Berwick, MD  
Administrator  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
2010 – 2011

CC: The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader, U.S. Senate  
The Honorable Harry Reid, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate  
The Honorable Paul Ryan, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives  
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives