

December 14, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Reid:

The diverse group of signatory organizations listed below join together to ask that the Senate eliminate the prescription drug coverage gap or “doughnut hole” in Medicare Part D. Both the final package in the House and President Obama’s speech to a Joint Session of Congress on September 9, 2009 assure us that the doughnut hole will be closed permanently by 2019, but we believe doughnut hole closure also must be a part of the Senate’s final health care reform package. The elimination of the doughnut hole is essential to meeting the President’s pledge and to guaranteeing affordable health care to Medicare beneficiaries.

Without this change, seniors’ out-of-pocket costs, currently six times greater than the costs faced by individuals with employer-sponsored coverage, will go unchecked and their access to necessary medications will be undermined. More than 3 million people fall into the doughnut hole each year, and millions more live in fear of reaching this dangerous gap in coverage. Research shows that people who have trouble paying for their prescription drugs are more likely to skip doses or stop taking their medications altogether, which can lead to more serious health problems and higher long-term costs both for them and for our health care system as a whole.

No senior should have to cut medication in half or skip doses their doctors say are necessary because prescription drugs are unaffordable. It simply doesn’t make sense to most seniors that they get no coverage for prescription drugs just when their drug expenses are going up, even though they must keep paying for premiums while in the so-called “doughnut hole.”

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

AARP
Access Alaska
AFSCME District Council 37 Health and Security Plan
AFSCME Retirees
Alaska Center for Public Policy
Alaska Commission on Aging
Alaska Public Health Association
Alaska Retired Educators Association
Alliance for Retired Americans
Alzheimer’s Association
Alzheimer's Association, Western and Central Washington State Chapter

Alzheimer Association, NYC Chapter
American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
American Academy of Nursing
American Assisted Living Nurses Association
American Association for Long Term Care Nursing
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Federation of Teachers Program on Retirement and Retirees
American Heart Association
American Medical Association
American Network of Community Options and Resources
American Nurses Association
American Public Health Association
American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
Americans for Democratic Action
Asian American Justice Center
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association for Gerontology and Human Development in Historically Black
Colleges and Universities
Association of BellTel Retirees
Association of Jewish Aging Services of North America
Bronx Independent Living Services
Business and Labor Coalition of New York
California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)
Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc
Center for Senior Centers and Services, NYC
Cerebral Palsy Association of Ohio
Community Action Partnership
Community Catalyst
Congress of California Seniors
Consumers Union
Easter Seals
Empire Justice Center
Families USA
FRIA
Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association
Geriatric Mental Health Alliance of New York
Gray Panthers of Rhode Island
Harlem Independent Living Center
Hispanic Senior Action Council
Housing Works
Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley
Institute for Puerto Rican and Hispanic Elderly
Keystone Real Estate Group
Labor Health Alliance
Lewis, Mason, Thuston County Area on Aging

Lighthouse International
Long-Term Care Community Coalition
Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative
Medicare Rights Center
Mental Health Association of New York
Montana Area IV Agency on Aging
Metro New York Healthcare for All Campaign
NADONA/LTC (National Association Directors of Nursing Administration/Long Term Care)
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of Chain Drug Stores
National Association of Directors of Nursing Administration
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs
National Association of State Units on Aging
National Black Nurses Association
National Center on Caregiving, Family Caregiver Alliance
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Congress of American Indians
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council on Teacher Retirement
National Education Association
National Gerontological Nursing Association
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Medical Association
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization on Disability
National Senior Citizens Law Center
National Senior Corps Association
National Women's Law Center
Nevada Women's Lobby
New York Association on Independent Living
New York State Coalition for the Aging
New York Statewide Senior Action Council
New Yorkers for Accessible Health Coverage
NCCNHR: The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
Northwest Federation of Community Organizations
Older Women's League
Opportunities Unlimited
Our Bodies Ourselves
Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute
PCMA
PICO National Network

Raising Women's Voices
Rhode Island Alliance for Retired Americans
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
Senior Agenda Coalition of Rhode Island
Senior Services, Inc. of Woonsocket, RI
Service Employees International Union
SEIU Healthcare 775NW
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center
Statewide Independent Living Council of Kansas (SILCK)
UAW (International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural
Implement Workers of America)
United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society
United Neighborhood Houses
Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio (UHCAN Ohio)
Washington Community Action Network
Washington Eldercare Alliance
Washington Heights and Inwood Council on Aging
Washington Long Term Care Ombudsman Program
Washington State Medical Association
Washington State Nurses Association