

March 25, 2019

The Honorable Donald M. Payne, Jr.
United States Representative
103 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rodney Davis
United States Representative
1740 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Donald McEachin
United States Representative
314 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David B. McKinley
United States Representative
2239 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives:

Our organizations, representing millions of American providers, patients, and consumers, write today in strong support of **the Removing Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening Act, HR 1570**. We applaud you for sponsoring this important legislation and for your leadership in the fight against colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among men and women combined in the United States.¹ In 2019, it is estimated that 145,600 Americans will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer and approximately 51,000 Americans will die from it.²

Over 1,700 organizations, including many of the organizations on this letter, have committed to eliminating colorectal cancer as a public health problem and are working toward the shared goal of reaching 80 percent screened for colorectal cancer in every community for whom screening is recommended.³ This legislation will get us closer to this worthy goal.

Under current law, Medicare covers a screening colonoscopy for beneficiaries without any cost-sharing. However, Medicare requires seniors pay a 20 percent coinsurance if polyps are found and removed during that screening. Removing precancerous polyps during a colonoscopy can prevent cancer, making colonoscopies a unique preventive service, but there is no way to know if you have polyps (and will incur cost-sharing) until after the colonoscopy is completed.

This coinsurance requirement can cause seniors to wake up to a surprise bill of as much as \$350,⁴ which can act as a serious deterrent to this lifesaving cancer screening. Importantly, those who have private insurance do not face this same cost barrier. Enactment of the **Removing Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening Act** would fix this inequity in Medicare and remove the coinsurance requirement for a screening colonoscopy.

It is critically important that Medicare-eligible seniors be screened for colorectal cancer. Approximately 60 percent of cases and 70 percent of deaths due to colorectal cancer occur in those aged 65 years and

¹ American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts and Figures 2019*. Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2019.

² Ibid.

³ <http://nccrt.org/80-in-every-community/>

⁴ Cost estimates provided by the American Gastroenterological Association.

older.⁵ Colonoscopies are proven to prevent and detect colorectal cancer at earlier stages when treatment is more effective and can save lives.⁶ The five-year relative survival rate for colorectal cancer is only 14 percent when caught at a later stage.⁷ If caught at an early stage with screening, the survival rate improves to 90 percent.⁸

The Removing Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening Act, HR 1570, will help ensure that everyone on Medicare has access to lifesaving colorectal cancer screening, regardless of their ability to pay. Again, we commend you for sponsoring this legislation, and look forward to working with you to advance it in the 116th Congress.

Sincerely,

AARP

Academy of Oncology Nurse and Patient Navigators

AliveAndKickn

Alliance for Aging Research

Ambulatory Surgery Center Association

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

American College of Gastroenterology

American College of Preventive Medicine

American College of Radiology

American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer

American Gastroenterological Association

American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy

Association of Oncology Social Work

CancerCare

Cancer Support Community

Chronic Disease Coalition

Colon Cancer Alliance for Research and Education for Lynch Syndrome (CCARE Lynch Syndrome)

Colon Cancer Coalition

Colorectal Cancer Alliance

Crohn's & Colitis Foundation

Digestive Disease National Coalition

Fight Colorectal Cancer

FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered

GI Cancers Alliance

Kiel Colon Cancer Foundation

Lutheran Services in America

Lynch Syndrome International

⁵ Siegel RL, Miller KD, Fedewa SA, et al. Colorectal cancer statistics, 2017. *CA Cancer J Clin.* 2017; 76(3): 177-93.

⁶ American Cancer Society. *Cancer Prevention & Early Detection Facts & Figures 2017-2018.* Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2017.

⁷ American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts and Figures 2019.* Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2019.

⁸ Ibid.

Michael's Mission
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Patient Advocate Foundation
Prevent Cancer Foundation
Raymond Foundation
The Colon Club
United Ostomy Associations of America, Inc.
Washington Colon Cancer Stars