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November 22, 2019

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
United States Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Re: Including Pharmacists in the Implementation of Executive Order (EO) 13890: Protecting and Improving Medicare for Our Nation's Seniors

Dear Secretary Azar:

We are writing in support of Section 5 of Executive Order (EO) 13890: "Protecting and Improving Medicare for Our Nation's Seniors." We believe that allowing providers, such as pharmacists, to perform at the "top of their profession" will help Americans receive better health care.

We appreciate the EO 13890 intent to implement the November 2018 report "Reforming America's Healthcare System Through Choice and Competition." which recommended allowing pharmacists and other health care providers to practice to the top of their license, utilizing their full skill set and training. The 2018 report also encouraged the federal government and states to consider proposals to allow nonphysician providers, including pharmacists, to be paid directly for their services.¹

Last Congress, legislation to allow pharmacists to be paid directly by Medicare for performing covered services in health-professional shortage areas received robust bipartisan support. H.R. 592, the Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act had 296 cosponsors, demonstrating just how impactful this change would be for patients across the country.

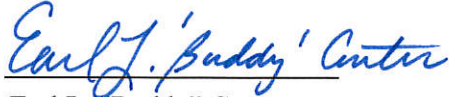
Millions of Americans lack adequate access to health care due to geographical barriers and primary care physician shortages in their communities. With almost 90% of Americans living within five miles of a community pharmacy,² and pharmacists practicing in many different health care settings, pharmacists serve an important role for our constituents. In addition, pharmacist that serve on patient care teams often reduce adverse drug events and improve outcomes for patients with chronic diseases. Recent changes in the practice of pharmacy in many states have resulted in pharmacists practicing on these care teams with other health care professionals to help maximize patient care services.

¹ U.S. Departments of HHS, the Treasury, and Labor. Reforming America's Healthcare System Through Choice and Competition. November 30, 2018, available at: <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/Reforming-Americas-Healthcare-System-Through-Choice-and-Competition.pdf>

² NCPDP Pharmacy File, ArcGIS Census Tract File. NACDS Economics Department.

Thank you for your consideration on this important matter to help our constituents receive valuable care from providers who can utilize their full scope of practice.

Sincerely,



Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress



Brett Guthrie
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Seema Verma, Administrator, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services