May 16, 2018

The Honorable Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD  21244

Dear Administrator Verma:

Better Medicare Alliance is an alliance of more than 100+ organizations, including providers, professional associations, aging services organizations, health plans, and more than 300,000 aligned Medicare Advantage beneficiaries. Together we support and advocate for policies that ensure Medicare Advantage remains a strong and stable option within Medicare.

We appreciate the efforts made by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) over the past year to improve the Medicare and You Handbook. We support efforts to continue to enhance the information and decision-making tools available to beneficiaries. We encourage the Administration to take further steps to better enable seniors to make informed decisions and become active choosers in their health coverage.

By modernizing the information and access to meaningful educational tools on Medicare options you will better empower Medicare beneficiaries to make educated choices about their health care, and thereby enable them to be smart shoppers regarding the health coverage options available to them. We strongly believe that the federal government can and should be closing these gaps of knowledge and understanding about the Medicare program.

We recommend the following actions to improve materials and decision-making tools for beneficiaries:

- CMS and the Social Security Administration (SSA) should update beneficiary educational materials to improve readability, offer visual illustrations of concepts to accommodate various health literacy levels, target outreach to provide more personalized support throughout the enrollment process, and incorporate innovative approaches to education and consumer assistance.
- Improve how CMS and SSA work together to educate and conduct outreach to Medicare-eligible beneficiaries, particularly during initial Medicare enrollment, including linking information and use of similar language and decision-making tools.
- Modernize Medicare Plan Finder, so seniors can easily compare Medicare Advantage to FFS options based on health needs, quality, cost and provider networks.
• Ensure State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs) have the resources and training they need to educate beneficiaries about both Medicare Fee For Service and Medicare Advantage.

As the Medicare population continues to expand and age, with over 10,000 baby-boomers aging into the program each day, and the population of those aged 80 and older nearly tripling between now and 2050, now is the time to modernize the Medicare enrollment process and tools consumers are using so they can make well-informed decisions about their Medicare coverage.

We thank you for your interest in enhancing beneficiary education and outreach on Medicare options. We stand ready to work with you as a partner and a resource in continuing to improve consumer understanding of Medicare Advantage.

Sincerely,

Allyson Y. Schwartz
President & CEO
Better Medicare Alliance

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Aetna
Alliance for Aging Research
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Medical Group Association
American Nurses Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
American Telemedicine Association
Area Agency on Aging Palm Beach / Treasure Coast, Inc.
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Association for Community Affiliated Plans
Atrius Health
Banner Health
Business Council of New York State
Central Ohio Primary Care Physicians
Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey
ChenMed
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities
Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey
Commonwealth Care Alliance
Connecticut Association of Health Underwriters
Consortium for Older Adult Wellness
Consumer Action
Council for Affordable Health Coverage
Delaware State Chamber of Commerce
Delta Dental of CA, PA, NY, & Affiliates
Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce
Direct Primary Care Coalition
Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley
Federation of American Hospitals
Florida Health Networks
Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health
Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce
Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce
Gundersen Health System
Health Care Transformation Task Force
Health Quality Partners
Healthcare Leadership Council
Humana
Indiana University Health
Inland Empire Association of Health Underwriters
Intermed
International Council on Active Aging
Iora Health
LeadingAge
Lehigh Valley Health Network
LIBERTY Dental Plan Foundation
Martin’s Point Health Care
Meals on Wheels America
Mercy Health
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of Dental Plans
National Association of Health Underwriters
National Association of Hispanic Nurses
National Association of Hispanic Nurses Garden State Chapter
National Association of Manufacturers
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
National Black Nurses Association
National Business Group on Health
National Caucus and Center on Black Aging
National Coalition on Health Care
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
National Medical Association
National Minority Quality Forum
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Retail Federation
naviHealth
Network for Excellence in Health Innovation
New Jersey Association of Nurse Anesthetists
New Jersey Business and Industry Association
New Jersey State Chamber of Commerce
New Jersey State Nurses Association
Northwell Health
Novant Health
Nurse Practitioner Association of New York State
Orange County Association of Health Underwriters
Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease
Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry
Philadelphia Corporation for Aging
Pittsburgh Business Group on Health
Population Health Alliance
Prevea Health
Public Sector Healthcare Roundtable
SCAN Health Plan
Senior Resource Alliance
Silver Sneakers — a Tivity Health Company
SNP Alliance
Society for Women’s Health Research
Summa Health
Teachers’ Retirement System of Kentucky
Temple Health
Texas Association of Business
The Gerontological Society of America
The Latino Coalition
Tivity Health
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
UnitedHealth Group
University of Michigan Center for Value-Based Insurance Design
Virtua
Visiting Nurse Service of New York
VSP Vision Care
WomenHeart
YMCA of the USA

cc: Demetrios Kouzoukas,
    Principal Deputy Administrator & Director of the Center for Medicare