May 2, 2023

The Honorable Chiquita Brooks-LaSure
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Department of Health and Human Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Administrator Brooks-LaSure:

We are pleased that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has taken a first step in clarifying medical coverage of medically necessary dental treatment under Medicare, consistent with the authority provided by Section 1862(a)(12) of the Social Security Act. As you have recognized, overall health is inextricably linked to oral health. And yet, dental care has long been inaccessible to millions of Medicare beneficiaries, including low-income Medicare beneficiaries and in communities of color, leading to an alarming situation in which two-thirds of Americans over age 65 have periodontal disease and one-fifth have lost all of their teeth. Untreated oral conditions have also increased Medicare beneficiaries’ risk of suffering chronic conditions such as diabetes, autoimmune disease, kidney disease, heart disease, and numerous forms of cancer, with the result being an increase in overall Medicare program costs.

Fortunately, the Physician Fee Schedule for 2023 took an important step forward by clarifying medical coverage for certain medically necessary dental treatment services and establishing an annual process for stakeholders to propose additional clinical scenarios for coverage. Beginning this year, the Medicare program is providing medical coverage for dental treatment that is necessary to the successful performance of organ transplant surgery, cardiac valve replacement, valvuloplasty procedures, and head and neck cancers. In addition, this year marks the first time stakeholders may offer for CMS’ consideration clinical evidence demonstrating other circumstances in which dental treatment may be inextricably linked and substantially related and integral to the clinical success of additional medical services covered by the Medicare program.

We are pleased that leading stakeholders in America’s medical, dental, and patient communities have utilized CMS’ nominations process to propose medical coverage for additional medically necessary services. Specifically, we understand nominations have been submitted for the following:

- Medical coverage of medically necessary dental treatment for beneficiaries diagnosed with diabetes mellitus, based on clinical evidence that non-surgical periodontal and preventive disease treatment is documented as achieving clinically significant reduction of blood sugar levels and, therefore, improves health outcomes and substantially reduces healthcare costs;

- Medical coverage of medically necessary dental treatment for beneficiaries diagnosed with blood and solid tumor cancers, due to the documented association of
such cancers, cancer treatment, and immunosuppression with oral health-related complications during chemotherapy and radiation adjuvant therapies; and

- Medical coverage of medically necessary dental treatment for beneficiaries diagnosed with systemic autoimmune disease complications, which increase the risk of advanced dental decay, tooth loss, and gum disease, and to treat periodontitis, which is clinically linked to the development of rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases.

We strongly encourage you to extend Medicare coverage for these conditions to continue progress in improving the health of Medicare beneficiaries. Further, CMS should also extend medically necessary dental coverage for additional conditions previously identified, including heart disease, stroke, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson’s Disease, gastrointestinal disease, rheumatologic disease, infected prosthesis, and chronic disease management.

We look forward to continuing to work with CMS to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries receive the treatment they need.

Sincerely,

Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress

Katie Porter  
Member of Congress

Kweisi Mfume  
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

C. A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress
Chris Deluzio  
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

Paul Tonko  
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress

Brendan F. Boyle  
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress

Andrea Salinas  
Member of Congress

Dina Titus  
Member of Congress
Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress

Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress
Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress

Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

Robert Garcia  
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress

Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress
André Carson  
Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress

Teresa Leger Fernández  
Member of Congress

Bill Foster  
Member of Congress

John Garamendi  
Member of Congress
Susie Lee
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

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Gwen S. Moore
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Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress
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