



April 23, 2018

The Honorable Jason Smith
1118 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
1111 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
1314 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tony Cárdenas
1510 Longworth House Office Bldg
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Smith, Blumenauer, McMorris Rodgers, Cárdenas:

On behalf of the undersigned groups, we would like to commend you for your bipartisan work on *H.R. 4143, the Dialysis PATIENTS Demonstration Act* (PATIENTS Act) which seeks to provide integrated health care for patients suffering from end stage renal disease (ESRD).

Collectively, we represent tens of thousands of people of color, who are disproportionately affected by ESRD and a myriad of other health issues. And, with vast numbers of Americans being cash poor (68% don't have access to \$1000 for unexpected expenses and 42% don't have access to \$250), out-of-pocket expenses are an insurmountable barrier to consistent and effective treatment.

We believe that the PATIENTS Act is a positive step in the right direction because ESRD patients are often some of the most complex patients in Medicare. While they are guaranteed Medicare coverage, which we support, there are significant out of pocket copay burdens that these vulnerable patients struggle to make. In addition, since Medicare does not offer supplemental benefits such as vision and dental, we understand many patients cannot be certified to have a clean bill of health in order to get on a list for transplantation.

We believe the voluntary design of the PATIENTS Act will change the outcomes of thousands of patients. It takes many of the best program designs from the ESRD Seamless Care Organization, from Medicare itself, and even from Medicare Advantage



Special Needs Plans. We also appreciate that the nephrologist can be a quarterback of the care team.

This demonstration, if enacted this year, will give many minority and vulnerable patients a comprehensive care coordination they have never been exposed to. Diabetes is the leading cause of ESRD, and we know from the data that more than 1 in 10 African American, Hispanic, and Native American patients suffer from diabetes. This makes them 3.8, 1.6, and 1.5 times more likely to suffer from kidney failure. Something must change for these patients, and we believe PATIENTS Act is a necessary next step in the advancement of their care.

Thanks for your leadership on *H.R. 4143, the Dialysis PATIENTS Demonstration Act*. We stand by to help you advance this positive Medicare demonstration. We strongly believe that the majority of the 450,000 ESRD patients should have an option for integrated care.

Thank you again for standing up for patients.

Sincerely,

Brady J. Buckner, Executive Director
Partnership for Innovation and Empowerment

Bruce Goldstein, President
Farmworker Justice

Dr. Charles Steele, President and CEO
Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Elena Rios, President and CEO
National Hispanic Medical Association

Karyne Jones, President and CEO
National Caucus and Center on Black Aging