

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 13, 2019

The Honorable Seema Verma  
Administrator  
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Administrator Verma:

We are writing in regard to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) commitment to undertake a comprehensive redesign of Medicare Plan Finder (MPF).<sup>1</sup> While we appreciate CMS' efforts to help individuals better understand their coverage options by redesigning MPF and for briefing staff on this issue on June 10, we remain concerned about the rollout process and fear feedback by advocates and advocacy groups was not thoroughly implemented. That is why we are requesting that CMS closely monitor the rollout of the new MPF tool and provide our staff with an update by November 22, 2019 on any data collected on MPF usage during the initial phase of the Open Enrollment period, and ask for a detailed plan on how the agency intends to address any issues with the software that are leading to information inaccuracies.

Older Americans, people with disabilities and their caregivers deserve easy-to-use, accurate and impartial Medicare coverage tools that provide the information needed to make choices about health coverage, prescription drug coverage and other needed services. In a previous letter, the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Aging Committee urged you to take into consideration the concerns of people with Medicare and their caregivers, as well as analyses and recommendations from experts, benefits counselors and advocacy groups as the agency engaged in redesigning the platform.

Based upon the attached letter from stakeholders dated August 27, 2019, we are concerned that may not have happened.<sup>2</sup> As the enclosed letter explains, third-party assisters, like State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs), failed to receive adequate time to learn to navigate the new tool and provide meaningful feedback so that CMS could implement an easy to navigate and robust website. Now, there are reports from SHIPs that the redesigned MPF tool is returning inaccurate drug pricing information. This is troubling. Without accurate and up to date plan information, individuals with Medicare cannot choose the plan that best fits their needs. If the unbiased health insurance counselors who are trained in navigating Medicare (SHIPs) are

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Senator Casey and Senator Collins to Administrator Seema Verma, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (April 3, 2019) (<https://www.aging.senate.gov/download/letter-to-cms-re-medicare-plan-finder>)

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Justice in Aging, Medicare Rights Center, Center for Medicare Advocacy and the National Council on Aging to Administrator Seema Verma, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (August 27, 2019) (<https://d2mkeg26uvvg1cz.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/082719-mpf-mcmg-2020-letter-cms.pdf>)

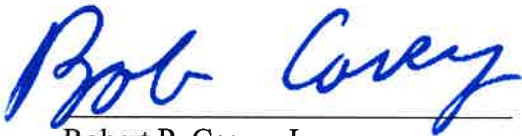
experiencing difficulty using the new system, beneficiaries may be less likely to enroll in a coverage plan that meets their health care needs and budget.

Some of the issues that have been raised with respect to the new system might have been addressed with more adequate time for review. For example, non-English speaking beneficiaries may not be aware of the availability of assistance due to your decision to remove translation disclaimers from important documents. This language should be reinstated immediately. Similarly, we are concerned that dual eligibles, individuals eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid, are not receiving clear, objective information. These oversights may have serious implications for the health care services that populations of greatest need receive.

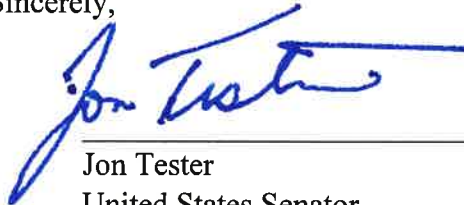
While your commitment to redesigning MPF and concerted effort to improve upon its known shortcomings is appreciated, more must be done to improve the website for all eligible beneficiaries. In order to better understand how the new MPF is impacting beneficiary enrollment in Medicare, we are requesting that you share with staff any data collected on its use from the initial phase of the Open Enrollment period, as well as a detailed plan on how the agency intends to address any issues that have been found.

Again, thank you for your dedication to ensuring that beneficiaries have access to an easy-to-use, accurate tool for finding the Medicare coverage that is right for them. We look forward to your response no later than November 22, 2019.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



Jon Tester  
United States Senator