

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 4, 2023

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

We commend the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for taking the important step of providing Medicare coverage of rapid, at-home COVID-19 diagnostic tests at no cost to beneficiaries, and we call on the Department to extend this critical coverage. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) at-home COVID-19 testing demonstration program has improved the health and wellbeing of Medicare beneficiaries around the country. It also ensured that Medicare beneficiaries have access to the same benefits as those with private health insurance. As HHS determines which programs created during the public health emergency (PHE) should be maintained, we urge you to consider continuing to provide Medicare coverage of rapid, at-home tests beyond the PHE.

HHS's hard work has protected the lives of countless older adults and people with disabilities during the pandemic. Despite the PHE being set to expire on May 11, 2023, seniors will continue to be more vulnerable to the real threat of COVID-19 beyond this date. Rapid, at-home COVID-19 tests are a critical public health tool to protect seniors.

At-home diagnostic tests play an important role in helping identify and isolate cases of COVID-19. These tests allow people to test themselves as a precaution or when they first present symptoms, facilitating the delivery of timely, appropriate follow-up care, such as a visit with a health care professional or the prescription of antiviral therapy. Easy access to testing with quick results has prevented the spread of COVID-19, reduced severe infection, and enabled many Americans to resume normal life.

Ending Medicare coverage for at-home COVID-19 tests could undo much of this progress and make it harder for Medicare beneficiaries to obtain accurate and timely information about their health. For example, without coverage under Medicare, many older Americans will not be able to afford to pay out-of-pocket for these critical tests, and they simply won't test.

The CMS demonstration program to cover at-home COVID-19 tests without cost-sharing is slated to end along with the PHE on May 11, 2023. In addition to the issues identified above, we are concerned that CMS is preparing to end a program before it has been appropriately studied or

evaluated. It is our understanding that CMS is presently conducting an evaluation of the demonstration, and while it remains unclear when that evaluation will be complete, it is not expected before May 11. At minimum, CMS should await the results of the demonstration before deciding whether to continue the program. CMS should be making data-driven decisions, particularly on matters of this significance.

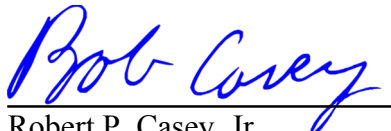
We are also concerned that seniors are unaware that Medicare coverage of rapid at-home COVID-19 tests without out-of-pocket costs is scheduled to come to an end on May 11, 2023. We urge HHS to ensure targeted outreach and education to Medicare beneficiaries about the upcoming deadline and their options for alternative sources of free or low-cost rapid COVID-19 tests.

Finally, we ask HHS and CMS to provide us with information on their authority under Section 402 of the Social Security Act to conduct and continue the CMS at-home COVID-19 testing demonstration.

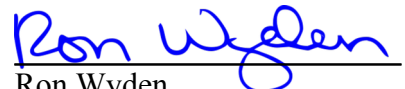
Given the fast-approaching end of the COVID-19 PHE, we ask HHS to provide us with a staff-level briefing to outline the administration's plans to potentially continue coverage of at-home COVID-19 diagnostic tests beyond the PHE and to address the concerns and questions we outlined above.

Thank you again for your work to improve the lives of older Americans. We look forward to continuing to work together to alleviate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and provide Medicare beneficiaries with what they need to stay healthy.

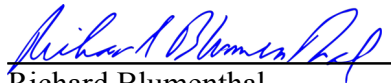
Sincerely,



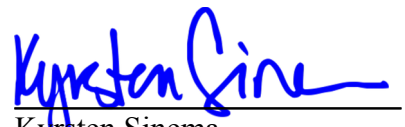
Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator  
Chairman, Special Committee  
on Aging



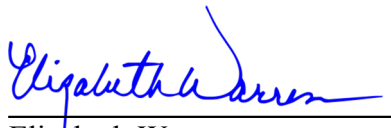
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator  
Chairman, Committee on  
Finance



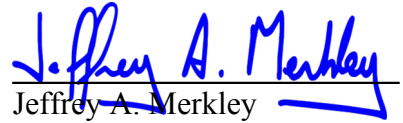
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator



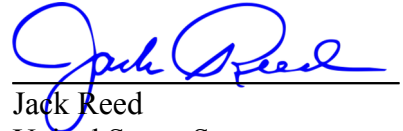
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



Jack Reed  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



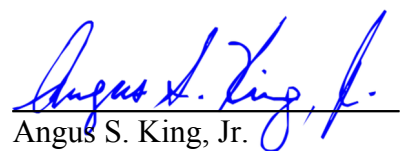
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



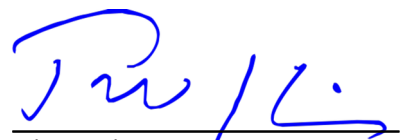
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



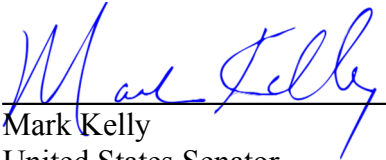
Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator




Tina Smith  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator

  
Mark Kelly  
United States Senator

  
Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator

Cc: Dr. Ashish Jha, White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator  
Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, Administrator for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services