



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

January 4, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid, Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus, Chairman
United States Senate Committee on Finance
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Christopher J. Dodd
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Chairman Baucus, and Senator Dodd:

We greatly appreciate your commitment to include elimination of the Medicare Part D coverage gap – the “doughnut hole” – as part of health care reform legislation that is negotiated in conference committee with the House of Representatives. The Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) is a coalition of national not-for-profit organizations concerned with the well-being of America’s older adults, and we view closure of the doughnut hole as a top priority in improving seniors’ access to health care.

As you have noted, the doughnut hole prevents many older adults from obtaining vital medications. Research has found that beneficiaries falling into the coverage gap reduce their prescriptions by 14 percent and that many may take less medicine than is prescribed to avoid the doughnut hole in the first place. About half of seniors with Medicare have incomes that are at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, and their household budgets are strained by drug prices that increase year to year. The 3.4 million beneficiaries who fall into the doughnut hole each year face an exceptional challenge: they must meet substantial out-of-pocket costs for their medicines while continuing to pay their Part D plan premiums.

President Obama declared that closing the doughnut hole in 10 years is an important goal of health care reform, and provisions to eliminate the coverage gap by 2019 are included in the House’s reform legislation. Achieving this goal would help millions of Medicare beneficiaries avoid the predicament of going without needed medications. When you negotiate the final legislation in conference committee, we urge you to close the Part D coverage gap as quickly as possible.

We are eager to continue working with you to close the doughnut hole, and thank you for your efforts to improve health care for all Americans.

Sincerely,

AARP
AFSCME Retirees
Alliance for Retired Americans

Alzheimer's Association
American Federation of Teachers Program on Retirement and Retirees
American Public Health Association
American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
American Society on Aging
Association for Gerontology and Human Development
 In Historically Black Colleges and Universities
Association of BellTel Retirees, Inc.
Association of Jewish Aging Services of North America
B'Nai B'Rith International
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.
Easter Seals
Families USA
The Jewish Federations of North America
Lutheran Services in America
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Association for Hispanic Elderly
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs
National Association of State Units on Aging
National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc.
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Osteoporosis Foundation
National Senior Citizens Law Center
NCCNHR: The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
OWL - The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW)

CC U.S. Senate members