

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 24, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Chiquita Brooks-LaSure
Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Secretary Becerra and Administrator Brooks-LaSure:

Thank you for all your work to increase access to free COVID-19 tests around the country, including your recent guidance requiring most insurance companies to cover the cost of up to eight over-the-counter at-home tests per person per month. We strongly encourage you to extend coverage to Medicare, ensuring access for the 61 million Americans enrolled in the program.

Along with vaccination, the widespread availability of free tests will help us defeat this pandemic. That is why we strongly support the Administration's work over the past year to increase the testing supply and lower costs. A year ago, there were no at-home rapid tests on the market. Today, there are hundreds of millions being distributed around the US, including the Administration's purchase of 500 million tests with funding included in the American Rescue Plan, and the planned purchase of 500 million more.

Required coverage of testing ordered by a physician, expansion of free testing sites through pharmacies and community health centers, and free at-home rapid tests available through COVIDTests.gov or 1-800-232-0233 are big steps forward, including for seniors. Recent CMS guidance requiring coverage of eight over-the-counter at-home tests per person per month will significantly expand access to millions of Americans with commercial health insurance. However, those enrolled in original Medicare and private Medicare Advantage plans do not have this same access. Seniors and people with disabilities enrolled in Medicare are at the highest risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and people over 65 account for nearly three-quarters of all deaths from the virus. The current policy leaves them on the hook for potentially significant out-of-pocket costs.

We share your commitment to making sure Medicare enrollees receive the highest quality health care, including access to free at-home rapid COVID-19 testing, and look forward to working with you to address this issue.

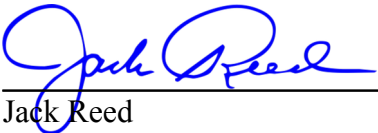
Sincerely,



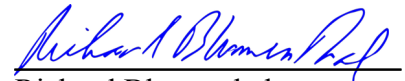
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



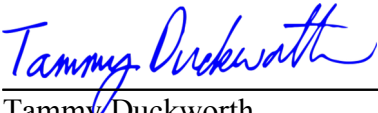
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



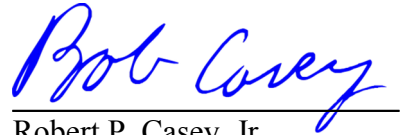
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



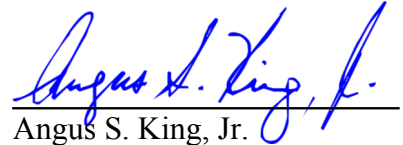
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



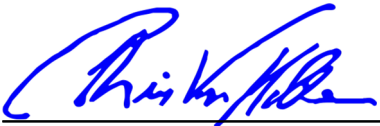
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



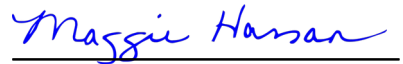
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
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Tina Smith
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Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator