



April 3, 2019

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chair
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents 131,400 family physicians and medical students across the country, I write to share the organization's support for several important bills to strengthen the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act's* consumer protections and to reduce the cost of prescription drugs and biosimilars.

The AAFP believes that all people regardless of social, economic or political status, race, religion, gender or sexual orientation, should have access to primary medical care and other essential health care services. Care should be comprehensive, affordable, and include protections for those with financial hardships. Having both health insurance and a usual source of care (e.g., through an ongoing relationship with a family physician) contributes to better health outcomes, reduced disparities along socioeconomic lines, and reduced costs.ⁱ

Maintaining the Affordable Care Act's Protections

Based on AAFP's health care for all policy,ⁱⁱ the AAFP is pleased to support the following legislative initiatives:

- **HR 986, the *Protecting Americans with Preexisting Conditions Act of 2019*.** In a [letter](#) to the Departments of Health and Human Services and Treasury, the AAFP expressed concerns that the new 1332 waiver rules could both increase costs and decrease the comprehensiveness of coverage, threatening vulnerable patients. We believe HR 986 will help maintain important consumer protections and access to essential services.
- **HR 1010, to provide that the rule entitled “*Short-term, Limited Duration Insurance*” shall have no force or effect.** Research has demonstrated that access to primary care helps increase access to high quality and lower cost care by encouraging preventive health, access to acute care, early identification of chronic disease, and disease management.ⁱⁱⁱ The AAFP has long advocated for high quality, low-cost care. This policy and others will ensure that quality remains an important health care priority.

STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

President John Cullen, MD Valdez, AK	President-elect Gary LeRoy, MD Dayton, OH	Board Chair Michael Munger, MD Overland Park, KS	Directors Robert Raspa, MD, Orange Park, FL Leonard Reeves, MD, Rome, GA Ada Stewart, MD, Columbia, SC Sterling Ransone, MD, Deltaville, VA Windel Stracener, MD, Richmond, IN Erica Swegler MD, Austin, TX	James Ellzy, MD, Washington, DC Dennis Gingrich, MD, Hershey, PA Tochi Iroku-Malize, MD, Bay Shore, NY LaTasha Seilby Perkins, MD (New Physician Member), Arlington, VA Michelle Byrne, MD (Resident Member), Chicago, IL Chandler Stisher (Student Member), Brownsboro, AL
Speaker Alan Schwartzstein, MD Oregon, WI	Vice Speaker Russell Kohl, MD Stilwell, KS	Executive Vice President Douglas E. Henley, MD Leawood, KS		

- **HR 1385, the State Allowance for a Variety of Exchanges (SAVE) Act.** The AAFP strongly supports state and federal partnerships to address our nation's health care needs. Specifically, a 2019 [letter](#) urged the Administration to "Continue reinsurance and other premium stabilization programs, and develop and sufficiently fund long-term premium stabilization programs, to enhance the availability of affordable premiums and encourage insurer participation." The AAFP supports the SAVE Act's proposals to maintain state health care exchanges. This proposal would help ensure that patients have a usual source of care and diverse insurance options.

Increasing Access to Affordable Drugs

Ensuring access to affordable medications is an integral part of family physicians' role as advocates for patients. Therefore, the AAFP supports the following bills that would increase access to prescription medications through enhanced market competition:

- **HR 965, the *Creating and Restoring Equal Access to Equivalent Samples (CREATEs) Act of 2019.*** Given the public's reliance on generic products which represent over 89 percent of medications filled, increasing access to these products must be a top priority. The AAFP strongly believes in lowering barriers for generic drug manufacturing, including efforts to ensure that safety protocols do not delay access to important generic drugs. The AAFP supports the bill's structures to increase competition between brand name and generic companies.
- **HR 985, the *Fair Access for Safe and Timely (FAST) Generics Act of 2019.*** The AAFP supports increased competition to ensure access to lower cost drugs and believes this proposal will help achieve this goal without compromising innovation.
- **HR 938, the *Bringing Low-cost Options and Competition while Keeping Incentives for New Generics (BLOCKING) Act of 2019.*** Family physicians have a meaningful interest in the drug pricing debate, in part, because of the complexity of care family physicians provide and the fact that the number and intricacy of conditions, complaints, and diseases treated in family medicine is [far greater](#) than those seen in any other physician specialty. The AAFP supports proposals to ensure that generic drugs can be produced as efficiently as possible. HR 938 will help ensure that generic manufacturers engage in fair market competition so that more affordable drugs are available, especially for patients with chronic conditions.
- **HR 1499, the *Protecting Consumer Access to Generic Drugs Act of 2019.*** In a 2018 [letter](#) to the Department of Health and Human Services, the AAFP urged increased authority for the Federal Trade Commission to address anti-competitive practices, including pay-for-delay settlements. The AAFP believes this legislation can help increase access to affordable drugs and produce health care savings.
- **HR 1782, the *Payment Commission and Data Act of 2019.*** Transparency has been an important tool for understanding prescription drug prices and areas for accountability. The AAFP supports this bipartisan proposal that will ensure that health care experts can guide Congress on ways to reduce health care spending.

We are pleased to comment on these bills and look forward to working with you to advance other comprehensive health care policies. As you continue reviewing health care access ideas, we urge you to examine the administrative burdens associated with health care and drug prescribing such as prior authorizations and step therapy. These cost containment strategies represent health care

barriers, particularly for individuals with chronic conditions that need consistent treatment. Please contact Sonya Clay, Government Relations Representative, at 202-232-9033 or sclay@aafp.org with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Michael L. Munger, MD, FAAFP
Board Chair

ⁱ The Robert Graham Center, The Importance of Having Health Insurance and a Usual Source of Care, Am. Fam. Physician (Sept. 15, 2004), available at <http://www.aafp.org/afp/2004/0915/p1035.html>.

ⁱⁱ AAFP, Health Care For All (2014), available at <http://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/health-care-for-all.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ *Family Practice*, Volume 33, Issue 1, February 2016, Pages 42–50, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fampra/cmv08>