



July 29, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, HELP Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chairman, Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman, Finance Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Schumer and Chairs Murray, Sanders, and Wyden:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) and the 127,600 family physicians and medical students we represent, I would like to express our support for the below provisions in the *Inflation Reduction Act of 2022* which would preserve Americans' access to affordable, comprehensive health coverage, eliminate cost barriers to essential vaccines and insulin, and lower prescription drug costs. The AAFP urges Congress to continue negotiations on budget reconciliation and swiftly pass legislation that will improve the health of our nation.

The AAFP [believes](#) all people should have access to affordable health care coverage that provides access to evidence-based care, including comprehensive and longitudinal primary care. This is why **the AAFP supported the American Rescue Plan's enhanced premium tax credits which lowered premiums for individuals and families purchasing insurance coverage through the health insurance marketplace, and we've advocated for making the enhanced premium tax credits permanent.**

Importantly, the *Inflation Reduction Act* would prevent the enhanced premium tax credits from expiring at the end of this year by extending them through 2025. This is an important step toward ensuring that millions of Americans can retain affordable, comprehensive insurance coverage. According to the [Urban Institute](#), more than three million people could lose coverage if the enhanced premium tax credits are allowed to expire.¹

Family physicians provide preventive services, including immunizations, to patients across the lifespan. They know how critical immunizations are for reducing illness, hospitalizations, and deaths associated with infectious diseases and counsel their patients on the importance of keeping up-to-date on recommended vaccines. Unfortunately, the U.S. has failed to meet its Healthy People 2020 goals for vaccinating adults. A [2016 study](#) published in *Health Affairs* found that the economic cost of vaccine-avoidance for adults was \$7.1 billion per year². Studies show – and family physicians know – that cost can be one of the biggest barriers to patients ultimately receiving their recommended vaccines³.

The AAFP has endorsed the [Helping Adults Protect Immunity \(HAPI\) Act](#) to eliminate cost-sharing for ACIP-recommended immunizations for all adults enrolled in Medicaid and the [Protecting Seniors Through Immunization Act](#) to bring parity between out-of-pocket costs for immunizations covered under Medicare Part B and Medicare Part D. We are pleased that the *Inflation Reduction Act* includes provision to eliminate financial barriers to adult vaccines in Medicare Part D and Medicaid.

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Managing prescription drug prices for their patients is an important concern for family physicians. Family physicians have a meaningful interest in the drug pricing debate, in part, because of the complexity of care they provide and the fact that the number and intricacy of conditions, complaints, and diseases seen in family medicine is far greater than those seen by any other physician specialty⁴. Ensuring access to medications is an integral part of a physician's role as an advocate for their patients. Unfortunately, and too frequently, family physicians encounter patients who cannot afford their medications and thus cannot adhere to treatment recommendations. Patients affected by high prescription drug costs also are more likely to experience adverse health effects, including increased stress and anxiety, and may forgo other needs, such as transportation, utilities, housing, doctor's visits, or other medications, to afford their medications.⁵

The AAFP has long [supported](#) policies to ensure the availability of effective, safe, and affordable prescription medications. In 2017, the AAFP became a member of the [Campaign for Sustainable Rx Pricing \(CSRxP\)](#), a nonpartisan coalition of nonprofit medical associations, insurers, and hospitals committed to addressing drug price increases by striking a balance between drug innovation and affordability. **The AAFP has urged Congress and the Administration to strengthen the United States' ability to control drug costs and out-of-pocket spending for patients.**

We are pleased that the *Inflation Reduction Act* includes provisions aimed at lowering prescription drug costs by allowing the Secretary of Health and Human Services to leverage Medicare's purchasing power and negotiate drug prices with manufactures and capping beneficiaries' annual and monthly Part D out-of-pocket costs.

The AAFP is also pleased to hear that the Senate is considering including provisions to make insulin more affordable in the budget reconciliation package. More than 37 million Americans have diabetes, and an estimated one-quarter of people with diabetes in the U.S. ration their insulin due to costs.⁶⁷ Unmanaged diabetes can lead to kidney damage, ICU hospitalization, and death.⁸ In 2021, diabetes deaths exceeded 100,000 in the United States for the second consecutive year.⁹ This is why **the AAFP endorsed the *Affordable Insulin Now Act* to cap cost-sharing under private health insurance and Medicare Part D for a one-month supply of insulin products at \$35 and [urged](#) the Senate to pass legislation to ensure that all patients who need insulin can afford it.**

We are encouraged by the progress being made on a budget reconciliation package, and we urge you to preserve the aforementioned legislative provisions to improve the affordability of health coverage, vaccinations, insulin, and prescription drugs. The AAFP stands ready to partner with Congress to pass this legislation. Should you have any questions, please contact Erica Cischke, Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs at ecischke@aafp.org.

Sincerely,



Ada D. Stewart, MD, FAAFP
Board Chair, American Academy of Family Physicians

¹ Buettgens, M., Banthin, J., & Green, A. (2022, April). *What If the American Rescue Plan Act Premium Tax Credits Expire?* Urban Institute . Retrieved July 29, 2022, from <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/What%20If%20the%20American%20Rescue%20Plan%20Act%20Premium%20Tax%20Credits%20Expire.pdf>

- ² Health Affairs. (2016, October 12). *The cost of US adult vaccine avoidance: \$8.95 billion in 2015*. Health Affairs. Retrieved July 29, 2022, from <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/forefront.20161012.057059/full/>
- ³ Community Preventive Services Task Force. (2016, January 20). *Increasing Appropriate Vaccination: Reducing Client Out-of-Pocket Costs for Vaccinations*. The Community Guide. Retrieved July 29, 2022, from <https://www.thecommunityguide.org/sites/default/files/assets/Vaccination-Reducing-Out-of-Pocket-Costs.pdf>
- ⁴ Leiyu Shi, "The Impact of Primary Care: A Focused Review", *Scientifica*, vol. 2012, Article ID 432892, 22 pages, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.6064/2012/432892>
- ⁵ The Endocrine Society. (2021, January 12). *Addressing Insulin Access and Affordability: An Endocrine Society Position Statement*. The Endocrine Society . Retrieved July 29, 2022, from <https://www.endocrine.org/-/media/endocrine/files/advocacy/position-statement/insulin-position-statement-jcem.pdf>
- ⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, January 24). *The facts, stats, and impacts of diabetes*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved July 29, 2022, from <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/library/spotlights/diabetes-facts-stats.html#:~:text=37.3%20million%20Americans%E2%80%94about%201,t%20know%20they%20have%20it.>
- ⁷ Silverman, E. (2019, October 20). *One-quarter of people with diabetes in the U.S. are rationing their insulin*. STAT News. Retrieved July 29, 2022, from <https://www.statnews.com/pharmalot/2019/06/18/one-quarter-of-people-with-diabetes-in-the-u-s-are-rationing-their-insulin/>
- ⁸ Endocrine Society. (2022, June 21). *Endocrinologists Share Patient Stories on Access to Affordable Insulin*. Endocrine Society. Retrieved July 29, 2022, from <https://www.endocrine.org/news-and-advocacy/news-room/2022/endocrine-societys-clinical-practice-guideline-offers-recommendations>
- ⁹ Romaine, J. (2022, January 31). *Diabetes deaths exceed 100K in US for second straight year*. The Hill. Retrieved July 29, 2022, from <https://thehill.com/changing-america/well-being/prevention-cures/592114-diabetes-deaths-exceed-100000-in-us-for-second/>