

**TAXPAYERS  
PROTECTION  
ALLIANCE**

September 22, 2020



President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Alex M. Azar  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20201



Vice President Michael R. Pence  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Seema Verma  
Administrator  
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services 7500  
Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21244



Mrs. Brooke Rollins  
Assistant to the President  
Director, Domestic Policy Council  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

President Trump, Vice President Pence, Secretary Azar, Administrator Verma, Mrs. Rollins:

On behalf of millions of taxpayers and consumers across the United States, the [Coalition Against Rate-Setting](#) (CARS) urges you to oppose price controls on the healthcare system. For the past year, some members of Congress and some individuals in the Trump administration have repeatedly floated the idea of “fixing” the pressing problem of surprise medical billing through a “rate-setting” system. These fatally flawed proposals would have Washington, D.C. bureaucrats dictating to doctors the prices they should charge patients. Recently, *Politico* [reported](#) that the administration is considering a plan that would, “outlaw health care providers from putting patients on the hook for thousands of dollars in expenses — but without mandating how doctors and hospitals would recover their costs from insurers.”

While such reporting gives cause for cautious optimism, we recognize that much remains to be negotiated. As such, the Coalition would like to reiterate that any mandates or price controls would make surprise billing problems worse and disrupt care for millions of patients across the country. These effects would be particularly devastating as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to claim far too many lives. We therefore urge you to reject rate-setting and embrace market-oriented solutions to solve the pressing problem of surprise medical billing.

During the worst public health emergency in our lifetimes, millions of patients across the country have found themselves in emergency rooms and healthcare clinics. Many of them reasonably assumed their troubles would be over after being discharged, only to receive a surprise medical bill in the mail days or even weeks after being discharged. Each year, 1 in 7 patients in the U.S. receive these unwanted, unexpected expenses after being sent home by their doctors. This devastating problem stems from increasingly narrow health insurance networks which increasingly refuse to compensate attending doctors at in-network medical facilities. Far-reaching pieces of legislation such as the Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare; signed into law in 2010) have simply made the





problem worse, and now, an estimated three-quarters of Obamacare plans feature narrow insurance networks.

Yet, despite federal interventions and regulations making the problem worse, some government officials want to double-down on bureaucratic control over the healthcare system. Members of Congress such as Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Rep. Frank Pallone (D-N.J.) have proposed rate-setting for doctors and repeatedly tried to insert this “fix” in Coronavirus-related relief legislation. Officials in the Trump administration have worked hard to get a thorough understanding of this issue and deliberate on their own plan to end unwanted medical expenses. But rate-setting would only make the problem worse, and lead to the widespread consolidation of hospitals, clinics, and doctor’s offices across the country. California has already tried this failed approach, implementing healthcare price controls in 2017. According to a 2019 *American Journal of Managed Care* study examining the law, rate-setting has led to healthcare facilities closing their doors and merging with other, larger practices. Doctors are even contemplating leaving California altogether.

On January 22, 14 advocacy groups and think-tanks formed CARS to warn lawmakers and the Trump administration about the myriad unintended consequences of rate-setting. CARS is now 34 groups strong, and its work has been cited extensively by national and state media. On April 28, CARS released a [letter](#) signed by more than 160 economists urging officials to reject healthcare price-controls.

CARS urges you to take these scholars’ arguments into account, and remain vigilant against federal overreach in the healthcare system. Millions of doctors are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic treating patients, and now would be the worst possible time to impose onerous price controls on them. Thank you for your time and consideration of this pressing issue.

Sincerely,

David Williams  
President  
Taxpayers Protection Alliance

Mario H. Lopez  
President  
Hispanic Leadership Fund

Christopher Sheeron  
President  
Action For Health

Andrew Langer  
President  
Institute For Liberty

Bob Carlstrom  
President  
AMAC Action

Harry C. Alford  
Co-Founder, President/CEO  
National Black Chamber of  
Commerce

Brent Wm. Gardner  
Chief Government Affairs  
Officer Americans for  
Prosperity

Pete Sepp  
President  
National Taxpayers Union

Norman Singleton  
President  
Campaign 4 Liberty

Robert Fellner  
Vice President & Policy Director  
Nevada Policy Research Institute



Ryan Ellis  
President  
Center for a Free Economy

Wayne Winegarden, Ph.D  
Senior Fellow & Director, Center for  
Medical Economics and Innovation  
Pacific Research Institute



Andrew F. Quinlan  
President  
Center for Freedom and Prosperity

Joshua H. Crawford  
Interim Executive Director Pegasus  
Institute



Jeffrey L. Mazzella  
President  
Center for Individual Freedom

Renee Amar  
Vice President for Policy and  
Government Affairs  
Pelican Institute for Public Policy



Thomas Schatz  
President  
Citizens Against Government Waste

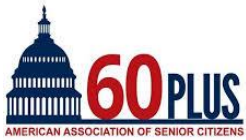
Paul Gessing  
President  
Rio Grande Foundation

Twila Brase, RN, PHN  
President & Co-Founder  
Citizens' Council for Health Freedom

Robert Alt  
President & CEO  
The Buckeye Institute

Matthew Kandrach  
President  
Consumer Action for a Strong  
Economy

David McIntosh  
President  
The Club For Growth



Jason Pye  
Vice President of Legislative Affairs  
FreedomWorks

James Taylor  
President  
The Heartland Institute

George Landrith  
President  
Frontiers of Freedom

James L. Martin, Founder/Chairman  
Saulius "Saul" Anuzis, President  
60 Plus Association

Jessica Anderson  
President  
Heritage Action For America