



UNITED STATES BONE & JOINT INITIATIVE

May 1, 2023

The Honorable Jason Smith
Chairman
House Committee on Ways and Means
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard E. Neal
Ranking Member
House Committee on Ways and Means
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Chairwoman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman
Senate Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Smith, Chairwoman McMorris Rodgers, Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Neal, Ranking Member Pallone, and Ranking Member Crapo:

Patients come to doctors of chiropractic when they are in pain. They may have an injury, an illness, or are simply feeling the effect of time. Unfortunately, for many Medicare beneficiaries, their lifelong relationship with their chiropractor ends when they turn 65 and they lose access to their trusted chiropractor because the current **Medicare statute doesn't allow access to many of the essential healthcare services they need most.**

We're happy to learn that may finally be changing. In the 118th Congress, your colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate have introduced the **Chiropractic Medicare Coverage Modernization Act (H.R. 1610/S. 799)**, which will ensure seniors have access to all services covered under Medicare that chiropractors are licensed to provide. Introduction is an important step that sets the stage for further progress this session.

Currently, Medicare beneficiaries who require covered services that are "attendant to" the spinal manipulation service provided by doctors of chiropractic, must obtain those services from another provider in order for Medicare to cover them. This requires the beneficiary to experience unnecessary delays, inconveniences, and the added expense (time, travel, etc.) of seeing a second provider. If a chiropractor determines that the beneficiary needs an X-ray, laboratory test or other diagnostic procedure, current policy does not even allow them to *order* those covered services. In such instances, further unnecessary visits and beneficiary expenses are required to obtain the required order from a second

Medicare provider—who will often turn around (especially in the case of X-rays) and order the service from a *third* Medicare provider.

Doctors of chiropractic are licensed in all 50 states as portal-of-entry providers who treat the “whole body” and whose scope of practice—as defined by their respective state law—allows them to provide a broader range of services compared with what is currently allowed under Medicare. A typical state licensure recognizes the ability and training of DCs to examine, diagnose, treat, and refer. Medicare coverage of the services of medical doctors and osteopaths is determined by state scope of practice. Likewise, the coverage for chiropractic services in Medicare should reflect the scope of practice determined appropriate by state authority.

In addition, allowing Medicare beneficiaries greater access to chiropractors can help alleviate the scourge of opioid overuse and abuse. The chiropractic profession offers a non-drug, noninvasive approach to chronic low back pain management that is supported by research. This conservative approach may include trying spinal manipulation combined with exercise and stretching. Active self-care and complementary and integrative strategies may provide a solution for many chronic pain sufferers, especially in our senior population. In 2017, the American College of Physicians (ACP) updated its clinical guidelines for acute and chronic low back pain to promote the use of conservative treatments such as heat, massage, acupuncture, and spinal manipulation before moving on to riskier treatments such as over the counter and prescription painkillers. It should be noted that all these conservative services are commonly offered by chiropractors, who are acknowledged experts in the use of spinal manipulation.

We believe all seniors should have the right to choose their licensed care provider under Medicare. With Medicare currently serving more than 65 million Americans, and projections for that number to grow by a third over the next ten years, we believe Congress should ensure patients have access to all forms of care to prevent high-cost interventions. Importantly, the Chiropractic Medicare Coverage Modernization Act **does not add new services under Medicare**. It simply allows patients to choose a chiropractor when they wish to do so.

We stand ready to help Congress make this a reality. Together, we can make it happen. We appreciate your support for making patients a top priority.

Sincerely,

Wendi Jo Howard

Executive Director USBJI



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