

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

December 7, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

We urge you to pass the Secure Affordable Vaccines Equally (SAVE) for Seniors Act (H.R. 8623) ahead of any decision by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to authorize a COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use. The SAVE for Seniors Act fixes a loophole in the CARES Act that could cause Medicare beneficiaries to face cost sharing for a vaccine authorized for emergency use rather than licensed under the Public Health Service Act.

Seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those with chronic and complex health conditions are more at risk of suffering severe illness from COVID-19, and many of these individuals receive health coverage through Medicare. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 8 out of 10 deaths reported in the U.S. from COVID-19 have been in adults 65 years of age or older. Residents and employees of long-term care facilities are especially vulnerable to the virus, and have accounted for 40% of deaths nationwide.ⁱ On December 1st, the CDC announced that long-term care residents – many of whom are Medicare beneficiaries – will be the highest priority to receive the vaccine, with seniors and those with underlying conditions next on the list.

Congress must act to clarify that Medicare beneficiaries will not face out-of-pocket costs for a vaccine, regardless of its pathway to market. There is an abundance of research showing that cost sharing causes patients to delay or forgo care.ⁱⁱ Since both vaccine candidates require two doses and two visits to a provider, removing financial barriers is especially important to ensure individuals complete the full course of immunization.

There is no time to waste. The FDA has scheduled meetings to discuss Emergency Use Authorizations (EUAs) for Pfizer's and Moderna's vaccine candidates on December 10th and 17th respectively. Once the EUAs are granted, vaccines will start being shipped to providers within hours and administered to priority patients shortly thereafter.

Again, we urge you to act quickly to ensure Medicare beneficiaries do not face barriers to receiving any eventual COVID-19 vaccine by passing SAVE for Seniors as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Abigail D. Spanberger
Member of Congress



Dusty Johnson
Member of Congress

ⁱ Slide 11 of ACIP COVID-19 Vaccines Work Group Presentation, December 1, 2020. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/meetings/downloads/slides-2020-12/COVID-02-Dooling.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ “Premiums and Cost Sharing in Medicaid: A Review of Research Findings,” Kaiser Family Foundation, February 2013. Available at: <https://www.kff.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/8417-premiums-and-cost-sharing-in-medicaid.pdf>.