



NATIONAL CONSUMERS LEAGUE

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June 7, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Schumer, Speaker McCarthy, Minority Leaders Jeffries and McConnell:

As organizations representing patients who depend on access to clinical laboratory testing to diagnose and manage a variety of conditions and diseases, we urge Congress to take immediate action to pass S. 1000 / H.R. 2377, the *Saving Access to Laboratory Services Act (SALSA)*. This bicameral, bipartisan legislation would update Medicare's payment system for laboratory services to make it sustainable, ensuring our nation's clinical laboratory infrastructure is well positioned to support robust availability of the full range of testing that patients need every day and in times of public health emergency, while striving to advance the next generation of personalized care to improve and save lives.

Without congressional action, Medicare reimbursement cuts – a fourth round scheduled to begin January 1, 2024 – could jeopardize access to many clinical laboratory tests that are used to diagnose, monitor, prevent, and manage common diseases for Medicare beneficiaries.

Clinical diagnostic tests play a critical role in health care by informing 70 percent of medical decisions doctors and other health care providers make to care for patients. For example, in 2020 care for Medicare beneficiaries was supported by more than 17 million hemoglobin A1C tests that assessed diabetes risk, 28 million tests that diagnosed and monitored heart disease, and 90,000 tests that diagnosed leukemia and hereditary breast and colon cancer.

A strong, national laboratory infrastructure is critical to ensuring that testing can be rapidly developed and made widely available when pathogens of concern are identified. Simply put, clinical laboratories strive to be prepared for whatever the next pathogen of concern may be and in times of emergency are part of the nation's critical infrastructure.

Furthermore, a healthy laboratory industry is essential to foster innovation in advanced diagnostics, which has not only led to earlier detection of disease but has also become a crucial tool in how care is delivered. In cancer, early detection and diagnosis of cancer and cancer biomarkers facilitate an understanding of disease progression and selection of an appropriate treatment regime for each patient.

Enactment of SALSA would address what has been years of deep Medicare payment cuts, while updating Medicare's payment system to ensure clinical laboratory services are on a sustainable pathway forward. Between 2017 and 2022, payment for some common tests for diseases like diabetes, cancer, and heart disease were cut by 27 percent. The next round of Medicare cuts would lower reimbursement up to another 15 percent for about 800 laboratory tests widely used to screen and manage many serious diseases. **It is essential that Congress protect patients by acting this year to fix the Medicare payment model for clinical diagnostic tests.**

Because of the serious implications for patients who rely on routine as well as advanced diagnostic laboratory services, Congress has acted three times to delay these cuts in recent years, but permanent reform is needed now. Fortunately, *the Saving Access to Laboratory Services Act* would update Medicare's payment system, which would help protect access to clinical laboratory testing, support investment in innovation, and strengthen America's clinical laboratory infrastructure.

On behalf of patients across the country, we urge you to pass *the Saving Access to Laboratory Services Act* before the end of the year.

Sincerely,

- A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation
- AliveAndKickn
- Alliance for Aging Research
- Alliance for Women's Health and Prevention
- American Association of Kidney Patients
- American Sexual Health Association
- AnCan
- Black Women's Health Imperative
- CancerCare
- Cancer Support Community
- Caregiver Action Network
- Caring Across Generations
- Cholangiocarcinoma Foundation
- Chronic Disease Coalition
- Community Liver Alliance
- Down Syndrome Association of Orange County
- FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered
- Global Liver Institute
- GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer
- HealthCare Institute of New Jersey (HINJ)
- Healthcare Leadership Council
- Healthy Men Inc.
- HealthyWomen

- ICAN, International Cancer Advocacy Network
- International Foundation for Autoimmune & Autoinflammatory Arthritis
- The Latino Coalition
- LUNGeivity Foundation
- Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
- Men's Health Network
- Minority Health Institute
- The National Association of Directors of Nursing Administration
- National Alliance of State Prostate Cancer Coalitions
- National Consumers League
- The National Grange
- RetireSafe
- Triage Cancer
- Vasculitis Foundation