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National Hispanic Medical Association

April 27, 2021

Dear Colleague:

The National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA) writes to you to express a need for patient and provider protections in model testing within the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI). Our organization believes CMMI plays an incredibly important role in testing new healthcare delivery concepts with a mission to improve the Medicare program so it can deliver higher quality care, more cost-effectively.

The Hispanic physicians our organization represents work tirelessly each day to improve the health of Hispanic and other underserved populations. Unfortunately, disruptions in their patients' health care delivery caused by wide-ranging CMMI models – which lack both accountability and transparency – create significant barriers for these physicians in the continuum of care. Not to mention that these patients often have serious or life-threatening illnesses or disabilities and simply cannot afford gaps in their health care.

CMMI has been in existence for over a decade now and there has been little to no oversight of its operations. Now is a good time to examine CMMI practices and set basic parameters for future models so that constituents' healthcare access is protected while ensuring CMMI can continue its focus on finding the most cost-effective and beneficial health delivery models for beneficiaries.

Additionally, participants must understand the changes CMMI is submitting to their healthcare plans and to their health care —this is particularly necessary for patients of minority populations and non-English speaking patients who depend on Medicare for access to vital treatments. Patients should also be asked for feedback on their experiences with model changes; otherwise, there is no way to ensure these potentially permanent changes fully satisfy patient needs. These suggestions only scratch the surface of what Congress must explore for future CMMI models so that it does not add to the already present barriers facing Hispanic communities' access to quality care.

As CMMI is reorganizing under the Biden Administration, this is a good opportunity for Congress to review its effectiveness and provide appropriate review and oversight of operations. Vulnerable patients, including Hispanic populations, and their doctors are counting on their representatives to keep patient-centered policy at the center of health care reforms. It's time to get CMMI back on track in developing value-based projects that protect patients and ensure access to high-quality care. Congressional action is long overdue.

Sincerely,

Elena Rios, MD, MSPH, FACP

President & CEO

National Hispanic Medical Association