November 13, 2019

The Honorable Donna Shalala

US House of Representatives

1320 Longworth House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Larry Bucshon

US House of Representatives

2313 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ann Kuster

US House of Representatives

320 Cannon House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Phil Roe

US House of Representatives

102 Cannon House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Shalala, Buchson, Kuster, and Roe,

As members of the Adult Vaccine Access Coalition (AVAC), we would like to take this opportunity to commend you for introducing the *Protecting Seniors Through Immunization Act of 2019*.

AVAC consists of more than fifty organizational [leaders](http://www.adultvaccinesnow.org/about/) in health and public health who are committed to raising awareness of the importance of adult immunization with the ultimate goal of addressing barriers to adult immunization. Our mission is informed by scientific and empirical evidence that shows immunization improves health and protects lives against a variety of debilitating and potentially deadly conditions, saving costs to the healthcare system and to society as a whole. AVAC priorities and objectives are driven by a consensus process with the goal of enabling a range of stakeholders to have a voice in the effort to improve access and utilization of adult immunizations.  A top priority for AVAC is to achieve increased adult immunization rates through improving education and awareness of recommended vaccines and addressing challenges to access.

Immunizations are a cornerstone of our nation's disease prevention efforts and have a demonstrated track record of success as a cost-effective means of reducing disease burden and saving lives among pediatric populations. The CDC estimates that over 20 years, childhood immunizations prevent 732,000 deaths and 21 million hospitalizations. The HHS Strategic Plan FY2018–2022, acknowledges that “infectious diseases are a major health and economic burden for the United States, and makes a commitment to “support access to preventive services including immunizations and screenings, especially for high-risk, high-need populations.” Yet, despite the well-known benefits of immunization, more than 50,000 adults die from vaccine-preventable diseases while adult coverage lags behind Healthy People 2020 targets for most commonly recommended vaccines: influenza, pneumococcal, tetanus, hepatitis B, herpes zoster, and HPV. Millions more adults suffer from vaccine-preventable diseases, causing them to miss work and leaving some unable to care for those who depend on them.

Adults seeking access to and coverage for vaccines encounter a confusing health care system that presents multiple barriers, including lack of awareness and information about recommended vaccines, financial hurdles including high cost sharing, as well as technological and logistical obstacles. The *Protecting Seniors Through Immunization Act of 2019* addresses these critical issues. The legislation will help inform more beneficiaries about Medicare coverage for vaccines. Often, Medicare beneficiaries do not realize that coverage for immunizations is divided between Medicare Part B and Medicare Part D. While vaccines under Medicare Part B are available to beneficiaries with no cost sharing or deductibles, beneficiaries face varied cost-sharing requirements under Medicare Part D plans. The bill brings parity between out-pocket costs between Medicare Part B and Medicare Part D.

The future holds great promise for new immunizations, specifically for older adults, but the benefits of immunization cannot be realized if patients do not access the services. Reducing the number of missed immunization opportunities for Medicare beneficiaries is an important step in improving health and reducing the burden of vaccine-preventable illness among this population. AVAC members are pleased to offer our support for this important legislation and stand ready to work with you toward equitable access and parity of coverage for all ACIP-recommended vaccines for the Medicare population.

Sincerely,

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| American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (AAOHN)Alliance for Aging Research American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM)American Immunization Registry Association (AIRA)American Pharmacists Association (APhA)American Public Health Association (APHA) Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)Association of Immunization Managers (AIM)Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC)Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF)Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO)DynavaxFamilies Fighting Flu GSKHep B United Hepatitis B Foundation Immunization Action Coalition (IAC)Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA)MedicagoMerckNational Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS)National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)National Consumers LeagueNational Council of Asian Pacific Islander Physicians (NCAPIP)National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID)National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA)National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable (NVHR)NovavaxPfizerSanofiScientific Technologies Corporation (STC) TakedaThe Gerontological Society of America (GSA)Trust for America's HealthVaccinate Your Family |
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