

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

August 1, 2024

Ms. Chiquita Brooks-LaSure
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Administrator Brooks-LaSure:

We write to you to express our support for greater patient access to self-measured blood pressure (SMBP) monitoring devices, which allow patients to play a more active role in managing their blood pressure and preventing harms associated with hypertension. In particular, we encourage the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to designate SMBP monitoring devices as durable medical equipment (DME) so more patients can benefit from this technology to manage their cardiovascular conditions.

Roughly half of all Americans have hypertension, which CMS considers the most important modifiable risk factor for coronary heart disease, stroke, congestive heart failure, and end-stage renal disease. Hypertension is also the number one chronic condition of Medicare beneficiaries. The Medicare population experiences higher rates of hypertension compared with the non-Medicare population. This disparity is even greater among people of color, as the prevalence rate of hypertension among Black American Medicare beneficiaries is 65 percent. When left untreated, hypertension can lead to stroke and heart attack, heart failure, peripheral arterial disease, and abdominal aortic aneurysm. Hypertension can also impact kidney function, as well as overall cardiovascular-related morbidity and mortality.

Access to SMBP monitoring devices encourages patient engagement, allows patients to manage their hypertension for overall health outside clinical settings either at home or elsewhere, and helps to optimize overall health care utilization. Many state Medicaid programs currently cover SMBP, in particular as a pregnancy-related service, because the device can be helpful for monitoring the health of the pregnancy, particularly for people at risk for preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, or other pregnancy-related conditions. States have recognized the benefits of covering SMBP in the Medicaid population as a way to address population health and tackle maternal morbidity and mortality. Medicare beneficiaries deserve access to these same evidence-based interventions to attain optimal health.

To date, CMS has declined to categorize SMBP devices as DME, even though a SMBP monitoring device can be used by a patient in a manner consistent with Medicare's coverage of DME. Without this critical designation, many patients will continue to lack access to technology that can prevent the onset or exacerbation of cardiovascular disease and other conditions through appropriate clinical and at-home interventions. If our country is to achieve significant declines across race, ethnicity and gender in cardiovascular disease and its associated mortality, it is imperative to address the high rates of uncontrolled hypertension by promoting more convenient and accurate methods of monitoring patients' blood pressure.

Enabling patients to self-monitor their blood pressure at home provides them with the information necessary to achieve blood pressure control. All patients with hypertension use their device in accordance with a treatment plan that has been created by the physician and patient for self-management. SMBP readings allow patients to take immediate actions, including effective lifestyle and behavior changes, as well as improve medication compliance, to achieve blood pressure reduction. Moreover, blood pressure measurements taken at home can provide more accurate health assessments for patients with masked or white coat hypertension than measurements taken solely in the health care setting, which is why SMBP monitoring is integral to proper blood pressure management. Furthermore, SMBP is especially valuable in rural areas where access to care can limit routine office-based blood pressure evaluation.

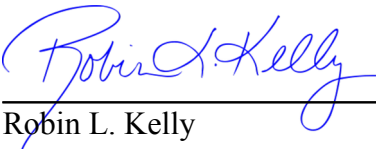
We strongly encourage CMS to designate SMBP devices as DME. Absent a decision, we request a response no later than September 30, 2024 about other policy approaches for coverage of SMBP devices for patients with known or suspected hypertension.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.


Sincerely,




Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress



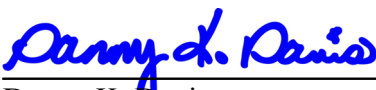
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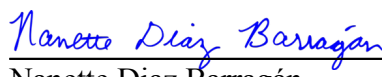
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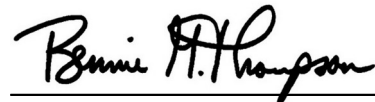
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Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
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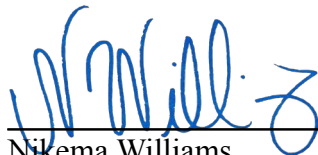
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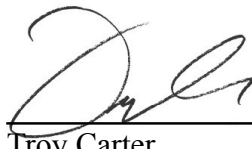
Andre Carson
Member of Congress



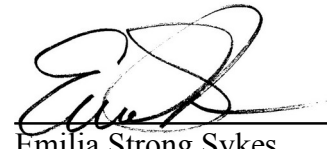
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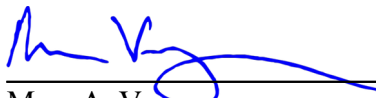
Troy Carter
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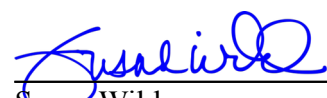
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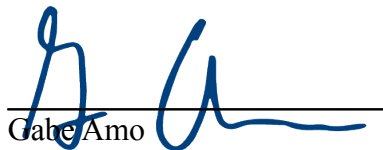
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