

November 13, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, and Leader Jeffries:

On behalf of the Association of Women in Rheumatology (AWIR), I am writing to urge you and your colleagues to take immediate action on two critical pieces of legislation before the end of the year: S. 2973, *the Modernizing and Ensuring PBM Accountability Act*, and S. 3430, *the Mental Health, Lower Cost Drugs, and Extenders Act*. These bills are essential steps toward enhancing patient access to affordable medications while promoting transparency within the pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) industry.

AWIR is dedicated to promoting the science and practice of rheumatology, fostering the advancement and education of women in Rheumatology, and advocating access to the highest quality health care, and management of patients with Rheumatic diseases.

The Modernizing and Ensuring PBM Accountability Act (S. 2983) addresses a dire need for reform in how PBMs operate within Medicare Part D. By mandating that any remuneration PBMs receive related to drug utilization services be derived solely from bona fide service fees (BFSF), this legislation effectively curtails the exploitative practice of spread pricing. It ensures that PBMs' financial incentives are de-linked from coverage or formulary placement decisions, aligning their compensation with the provision of actual value to patients. Furthermore, requiring PBMs to report critical data, including retained compensation and total manufacturer rebates, will enhance transparency and allow for better oversight.

In addition, the limited rebate pass-through provision included in the *Mental Health, Lower Cost Drugs, and Extenders Act* (S. 3430) will significantly alleviate the financial burden on patients with chronic illnesses. By ensuring that coinsurance payments for select medicines are based on their net price—after discounts and rebates—rather than the list price, this legislation directly addresses the affordability crisis faced by many beneficiaries. While this reform does not encompass all medications, it is a vital first step towards broader access and support for patients managing conditions like asthma, anticoagulation therapy, and cardiovascular diseases.

As advocates for improved healthcare access and affordability, AWIR believes that these legislative efforts will make a meaningful impact on the lives of patients, particularly those with chronic

rheumatologic conditions. As such, we urge Congress to prioritize these bills and facilitate their passage to ensure that patients in need are not denied their right to effective and affordable treatment.

Thank you for your attention to this crucial matter. We look forward to your leadership in advancing these important initiatives.

Sincerely,

Gwenesta Melton, MD
Vice President and Co-Chair of Advocacy
AWIR

Stephanie Ott, MD
Co-Chair of Advocacy
AWIR