November 12, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Speaker  Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives  United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515  Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader  Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives  United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515  Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, and Leaders McConnell, McCarthy, and Schumer:

Surprise bills—also known as surprise out-of-network “balance bills”—are an egregious health care cost and are utterly unpredictable for families. Surprise medical bills occur when consumers are charged for care from out-of-network providers that they receive due to no fault of their own. Families who make their best attempt to navigate the health coverage and care system by identifying in-network facilities and providers still receive surprise medical bills that can amount to hundreds, thousands, and even tens-of-thousands of dollars.

Unfortunately, surprise bills are incredibly common. One-in-five emergency department visits results in a surprise medical bill, but this practice can affect families in many different situations, from air and ground emergency transport, to ancillary testing services being sent to an out-of-network lab. While a number of states have passed laws dealing with surprise bills, for the majority of people in America, including most with employer-sponsored insurance, only Congress can protect them. With thousands of families across the country hit with surprise bills each day, it is past time for this appalling practice to end.

Public polling released today found that more than four in ten voters (44 percent) have received a surprise bill and six out of ten (60 percent) are worried that they will receive one. Nearly 9 out of 10 (87 percent) say it is very important that Congress pass legislation to ban surprise bills. Yet despite overwhelming public support for legislation to ban surprise bills this year, Congress appears to be caught at an impasse. Powerful stakeholders are engaged in a multi-million dollar lobbying war over the details of the bill. Once again, powerful interests are holding patients and families hostage. Inaction on the part of Congress is unacceptable.

Nearly three out of four (74 percent) voters say they would be concerned if industry lobbying on surprise bills stopped Congress from acting. As leaders of your respective Caucuses in Congress, each of you has promised to protect your constituents from surprise bills and bring down health care costs. With Congress now considering its end-of-year policy and budgetary priorities, we urge you to protect patients and consumers.

On behalf of America’s families, we call on you to pass comprehensive legislation to ban surprise billing by the end of 2019.
Sincerely,

Families USA
ACA Consumer Advocacy
AFSCME
Alpha-1 Foundation
American Association on Health and Disability
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Federation of Teachers
American Heart Association
American Kidney Fund
American Liver Foundation
American Lung Association
American Medical Student Association
American Muslim Health Professionals
Arthritis Foundation
Community Catalyst
Consumer Reports
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
Doctors for America
Epilepsy Foundation
First Focus Campaign for Children
GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer
Hemophilia Federation of America
Immune Deficiency Foundation
Lakeshore Foundation
Mended Little Hearts
MomsRising

National Association of Social Workers
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Community Action Partnership
National Consumers League
National Disability Rights Network
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Partnership for Women & Families
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New Yorkers for Accessible Health Coverage
Pennsylvania Health Access Network
Public Citizen
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
The Arc of the United States
United Spinal Association
Universal Health Care Action Network
Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut
Virginia Poverty Law Center
Voices for Progress
VOR - A Voice Of Reason
West Virginians for Affordable Health Care
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease
WV Citizen Action Group
WV Working Families Party
National Center for Parent Leadership, Advocacy, and Community Empowerment
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network