

November 12, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
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