

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 23, 2019

The Honorable Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Administrator Verma,

We write today to express our concern with the application deadline of February 19, 2019 for Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) applying to participate in the Medicare Shared Savings Program (MSSP) beginning in July 2019. Due to CMS' newly released policies and requirements for the program, many ACOs are actively working to understand how they may successfully participate in the program. Current ACO participants have informed us that even an additional few weeks would be helpful and we request that you provide additional time for ACOs to evaluate participation in this voluntary program.

While we appreciate the Agency's effort in its final rule for MSSP ACOs, posted December 21, 2018, to provide a 6-month participation period in the latter half of 2019, we have heard from the ACO community that the February 19, 2019 deadline for applications does not provide adequate time for some ACOs to evaluate the new and complex rules established by the final rule. As you know, an ACO is not a single entity but a network of different providers affiliated under the ACO's umbrella, including physician groups, hospitals, and skilled nursing facilities. To be successful, ACOs need time to obtain buy-in from ACO entity participants and leadership regarding new or continued participation.

ACOs must engage with actuaries to determine participation options under the agency's final rule, options which take time to determine given the complexity of the changes and the agency's decision to move ACOs into risk faster. ACOs often work with dozens of medical groups and hospitals – some ACOs can include nearly 200 unique sets of providers and must secure sign-on from multiple boards and governing bodies before finalizing applications.

We understand the time constraints CMS must operate within but ask that you keep in mind that this truncated timeline could harm program participation and encourage the agency to consider a March deadline.

More than 10 million seniors on Medicare receive care through an ACO – representing about 20 percent of all Medicare beneficiaries. Improving quality and lowering cost for those seniors is an important goal, and it is imperative that MSSP participants are fully prepared.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your efforts to transform health care delivery. We look forward to working with CMS as it continues to shift our system away from one that rewards volume and toward one that rewards value and await your response.

Sincerely,



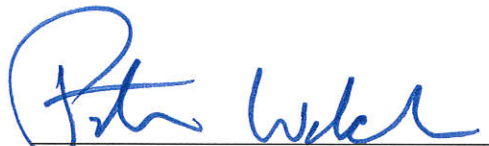
Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress



Mike Kelly
Member of Congress



Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress