Improve Senior Access to Pharmacies
Co-Sponsor H.R. 793

Retail pharmacies play a key role in maintaining healthcare access to millions of Americans. The services they provide in helping patients take their medications regularly and correctly lead to improved care while saving precious healthcare dollars. NACDS believes patients should be given the freedom to select a pharmacy that best fits their personal health needs and provides the most accessible care. Limited Medicare Part D networks impose restrictions on patient freedom to patronize the business of their choosing and cut off access to knowledgeable professionals that play a critical role in providing care and producing cost savings.

Recent legislation introduced by Rep. Morgan Griffith (R-VA), H.R. 793, the *Ensuring Seniors Access to Local Pharmacies Act of 2015*, will allow “Any Willing Pharmacy” in medically-underserved communities to participate in prescription drug plan networks in Medicare as a preferred pharmacy. The legislation is essential as seniors face diminished access to needed services through the pharmacy of their choice due to restrictive pharmacy networks.

Patients benefit most when they are allowed to use the pharmacy of their choice. Unfortunately, the restrictive policies of preferred pharmacy networks too often result in patients forced into pharmacies that don’t meet their personal needs or that are too far from their homes. This has become especially problematic in rural, and other underserved areas, where older Medicare beneficiaries often are required to travel long distances to use a preferred pharmacy in their network.

Patients should be free to select a health plan that best fits their personal health needs and provides accessible pharmacy locations. H.R. 793 would help accomplish this goal by allowing pharmacies in medically-underserved communities to participate in prescription drug plan networks in Medicare as a preferred pharmacy if they are willing to meet the terms and conditions of the plan. This model works well in commercial health plans, which allow pharmacies that are willing to meet the terms and conditions of the network to participate. Restricting pharmacies from participating in a network only limits patient choice in patronizing the business of their choosing and seeing the pharmacists they know and trust for improved care.

We urge Congress to help to ensure continued access to pharmacies for Medicare beneficiaries through support of, H.R. 793, the *Ensuring Seniors Access to Local Pharmacies Act of 2015*, sponsored by Rep. Griffith. This important legislation would help maintain pharmacy access for Medicare beneficiaries who count on visiting the pharmacy of their choice to provide the services they so greatly need.