November 19, 2024

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

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

Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Dear Speaker Johnson and Leaders Jeffries, Schumer and McConnell:

On behalf of the Advanced Care at Home Coalition (the ACH Coalition), and like-minded stakeholders focused on creating a pathway to permanent coverage for advanced care at home services, we are writing to thank you for your continued support of the hospital at home waiver program and ask that Congress take urgent action before the end of the year to preserve long-term access to this critical care pathway.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Acute Hospital Care at Home (AHCaH) waiver, initiated by CMS at the height of COVID in 2020, and statutorily extended by Congress in December 2022, provides an important pathway to safe, high-quality inpatient level of care for Medicare patients in the comfort of their homes. Without Congressional action, this vital program will expire at the end of 2024.

Bipartisan legislation to advance a five-year extension of the waiver flexibilities has been introduced in the House (H.R. 8260, by Representatives Wenstrup and Blumenauer) and Senate (S. 4350, by Senators Carper and Tim Scott) and advanced out of the House Ways and Means (H.R. 8261) and House Energy and Commerce (H.R. 7623) Committees on a unanimous basis earlier this year.

Recently, a statutorily-mandated CMS report to Congress on the AHCaH waiver initiative affirmed the safety and quality of care being provided under hospital at home, finding that patients receiving care in the home experienced generally lower mortality rates, lower hospital-acquired infection rates and comparable hospital readmissions rates to patients receiving care in a more traditional bricks and mortar setting. The report also noted the need for additional data and more time to thoroughly analyze issues related to cost and quality that could better inform future Congressional decision-making on the pathway for a permanent program.

Notably, the Congressional Budget Office has indicated that the length of the ACHaH waiver extension does not add meaningfully to the "score" of a waiver extension – and we hope this provides flexibility to Congressional leaders to advance a five-year extension so that the program can be given time to mature and that sufficient data can be collected and analyzed to inform the contours of a permanent program.

Since Congress last took action to extend the AHCaH waiver in December 2022, nearly 100 additional hospitals have sought and received waivers to participate, demonstrating clear ongoing interest in expanding this critical program. Hospitals and health systems that started programs at the height of COVID-19 are just beginning to reach a sustainable size. Today, according to CMS, 373 hospitals across 139 systems in 39 states are approved for the AHCaH waiver program.

We believe strongly that a five-year extension of the current waiver will provide the stability and predictability necessary for providers and plans to scale nascent programs to sustainable levels, while also allowing for increased provider and patient participation, enhanced data collection, continued spreading of best practices, and improved access to underserved populations.

Thank you again for your leadership on this important issue. The ACH Coalition looks forward to working with you to advance the ACHaH waiver extension and we look forward to being a resource to you and your staff throughout the legislative process.

Sincerely,

Advanced Care at Home Coalition (www.achcoalition.org)
Advocate Health
Alliance of Community Health Plans (ACHP)
America's Physician Groups (APG)
AMGA
Bellin Home Health
Beth Israel Lahey Health
ChristianaCare
Contessa Health
Hackensack Meridian Health
HealthPartners
Kaiser Permanente
Kent Hospital at Home – Care New England
Mayo Clinic
Medically Home
Michigan Medicine

Novant Health
Orlando Health
Texas Health Resources
Saint Luke's Health System
SENA Health
UMass Memorial Health

cc:
The Honorable Jason Smith, Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means
The Honorable Richard Neal, Ranking Member, House Committee on Ways and Means
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Chair, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
The Honorable Ron Wyden, Chair, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Mike Crapo, Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee