

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 12, 2017

Secretary Tom Price
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Administrator Seema Verma
U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Secretary Price and Administrator Verma:

We write to urge you to unfreeze Navigator grants and immediately release Notices of Award to 2017 program grantees. As you know, Navigators are essential to the success of Open Enrollment, which begins just a few weeks from now.

Navigators provide an essential, free service to people across the country who need help finding the best plan for their needs and budget. Since its inception, the Navigator program has helped over 9 million consumers learn about their coverage options. Comparing coverage options can be confusing, especially for people who haven't had insurance in the past. Navigators help consumers find and enroll in the plan that's best for them and their families.

On Friday, September 1st, your Department unexpectedly froze committed funding for the Navigator grant period that was scheduled to begin on Saturday, September 2nd. As of Monday, September 11th, grantees have received no update on when they should expect to receive this essential funding. Disturbingly, we have heard reports that some Navigators have already been laid off because of CMS's highly unusual actions.

Americans already face a number of new hurdles to enrolling in coverage during the upcoming Open Enrollment period, including an enrollment timeframe that has been cut in half and a 90% cut to the outreach budget that could have informed consumers about this significant change. Destabilizing the Navigator program could further compound the challenges consumers will face in understanding when and how to enroll. Helping Americans sign up for Marketplace coverage has many benefits, including strengthening the risk pool of the individual health insurance market. Conversely, discouraging enrollment could weaken the market and drive up premiums.

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Navigators are an essential resource for the American people, and the Navigator program is critical to the success of Open Enrollment. We urge you to unfreeze these funds immediately with a retroactive date of September 2nd.

Sincerely,



Carol Shea-Porter



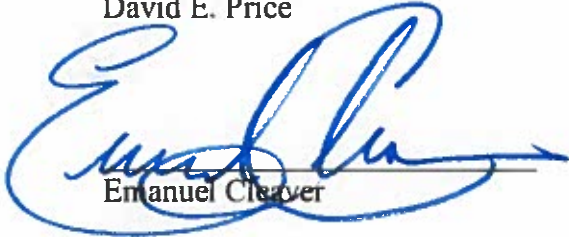
Rick Larsen



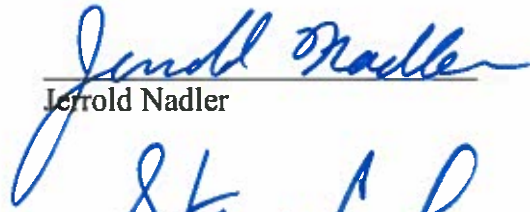
David E. Price



Tom O'Halleran



Emanuel Cleaver



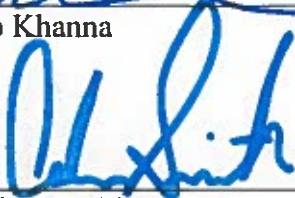
Jerrold Nadler



Ro Khanna



Steve Cohen



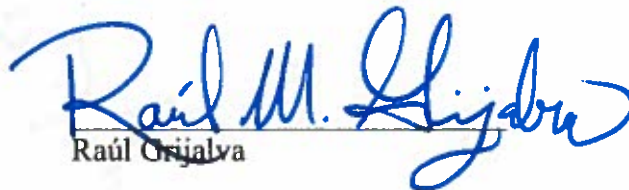
Adam Smith



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Bill Foster



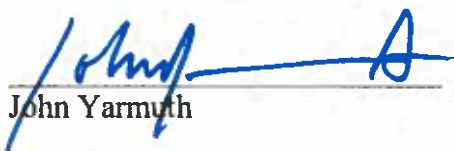
Marcy Kaptur



David Scott



Chellie Pingree



John Yarmuth



Tim Ryan



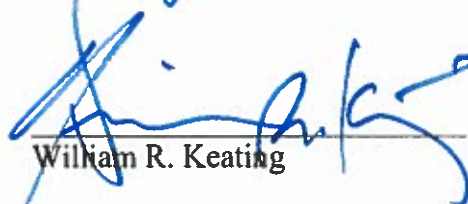
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