



**Jared Golden**  
Congress of the United States  
2nd District of Maine  
October 14, 2021

The Honorable Richard Neal  
Chairman  
Committee on Ways & Means  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy & Commerce  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Neal and Pallone:

I am writing today to ask that you work with Democratic caucus leaders to avoid the potentially harmful half-measures proposed in the current reconciliation bill related to Medicare.

I have previously joined many of my colleagues in supporting a policy to allow the Medicare program to negotiate lower prescription drug prices for seniors and millions of other Americans. I have also supported using the savings from prescription drug reforms to lower the age of eligibility for Medicare, or to expand Medicare benefits for current beneficiaries to cover vision, hearing, and dental care. I continue to believe these proposals could be among the most meaningful and effective measures Congress could take to lower costs and increase access to health care for seniors in this country. However, it is critical that these changes be done in a responsible way that strengthens and protects the Medicare program in the long run.

The proposed expansion of Medicare coverage included in the House Budget Committee's draft reconciliation bill does not meet these standards. First, unlike proposed hearing and vision benefits, the dental benefit would not begin until 2028. To make matters worse, beneficiaries would not see the full 50 percent federal cost-share on major procedures for another four years after that, in 2032. I am concerned that such a long delay in roll out of this coverage is a deliberate effort to shift costs outside the ten year score of this legislation, thereby masking its true cost. As a result, this is an underdeveloped proposal that would leave seniors in need of affordable dental coverage today without this benefit for at least seven years after enactment of this bill. For many seniors, this would sadly amount to an empty promise.

In addition, the Budget Committee's proposal breaks the standard policy of tying Part B premiums to a proportion of program costs. Because premiums scale by income, wealthy Part B beneficiaries who do not struggle to pay for dental care would save more under this policy than would low-income seniors. Additionally, unless the costs of these new benefits are fully offset, the proposal as written will create new budgetary pressures on the Treasury's General Fund. To ensure the dental benefits provision is not regressive and does not place added burden on the General Fund, we should allow premiums to increase for high-income beneficiaries.

As you continue to develop and negotiate the reconciliation bill, I urge you to reexamine the provisions expanding the Medicare program to root out budget gimmicks and to ensure that these

new benefits are targeted to seniors in need financially, that they are fully paid for, and are implemented quickly. If the provisions cannot be improved upon to meet these standards, they should be set aside so that we can address these issues before making changes to the Medicare program.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jared F. Golden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'J' and 'G'.

Jared F. Golden  
Member of Congress