December 21, 2017

The Honorable Seema Verma

Administrator

U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

7500 Security Boulevard

Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Administrator Verma:

Mental Health America (MHA) supports policy changes by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to more directly share savings negotiated on pharmaceuticals with the individuals accessing them, rather than aggregating these savings in the form of reduced premiums.

MHA – founded in 1909 – is the nation's leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and to promoting the overall mental health of all Americans. Our work is driven by our commitment to promote mental health as a critical part of overall wellness, including prevention services for all, early identification and intervention for those at risk, integrated care, services, and supports for those who need it, with recovery as the goal.

MHA works to ensure that all Americans to have access to affordable and effective behavioral health care. While sharing pharmaceutical rebates in the form of health insurance premium and other cost-sharing reductions increases the overall affordability of care, it can still mean that individuals in need of behavioral health care have a needlessly higher, and unfair, cost burden for their care when the rebates were tied to their medications. By sharing the savings with individuals directly, the policy change would better ensure that individuals are not left exorbitant behavioral health care bills through no fault of their own, and play a part in rectifying health and cost disparities.

The undersigned thank CMS for its thoughtful consideration of how to address the raising cost burden while promoting access for those in need. For further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Nathaniel Z Counts, J.D., Senior Policy Director of MHA, at ncounts@mentalhealthamerica.net.

Sincerely,



Nathaniel Counts, J.D.

Senior Policy Director

Mental Health America

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