June 21, 2016

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

The National Volunteer Diabetes Leadership Council is writing to you today to express our frustration and deep concern that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has failed to publicly comment on the demonstrated adverse health consequences associated with the implementation of the competitive bidding program.

As you are aware, CMS has repeatedly reported that competitive bidding has saved millions of dollars with no disruption of beneficiary access to needed products and supplies. However, the recent report by Puckrein and colleagues demonstrated that competitive bidding caused significant disruption of beneficiary access to diabetes testing supplies, which was associated with increased mortality, hospitalizations and associated costs.

Despite overwhelming evidence of disruption and beneficiary harm, CMS continues to claim that the program is a success. Yet, the agency refuses to reveal the methodology it used to monitor beneficiary safety and evaluate financial outcomes. According to a 37-page report by the National Minority Quality Forum, prepared with assistance from Dr. David Marrero and his staff, CMS’s findings of no disruption of access and no adverse health outcomes “are not supported by the data and methodology descriptions presented in CMS’s reports.”

We find it disturbing that although Dr. Marrero has been highly publicized by CMS as the developer of its diabetes prevention program, which is now eligible for Medicare expansion, the agency has outright dismissed his critique of CMS’s monitoring methodologies regarding competitive bidding.

The American public is entitled to a comprehensive, fully transparent disclosure of CMS’s methods for assessing the true health and cost outcomes of competitive bidding, yet lacks the authority to compel the agency to provide this information. Only Congress has power and authority. We urge Congress to suspend the competitive bidding program until CMS provides this information and can credibly demonstrate its ability to safeguard beneficiary lives.

Sincerely,

The leadership of the National Diabetes Volunteer Leadership Council

   Larry Smith, NDVLC President, ADA Chair of the Board, 2005-2006

   Larry Ellingson, R. Ph., Vice President NDVLC, ADA Chair of the Board, 2004-2005
George Huntley, NDVLC Treasurer, ADA Chair of the Board, 2009
Stewart Perry, NDVLC Secretary, ADA Chair of the Board, 2008
John Griffin, Esq., ADA Chair of the Board, 2011
Hunter Limbaugh, ADA Chair of the Board, 2012
Stan Panasewicz, ADA Treasurer, 2003-2006
Janel Wright, ADA Chair of the Board, 2015

ABOUT THE NATIONAL DIABETES VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The National Diabetes Volunteer Leadership Council (NDVLC) is an organization comprised of former chairs of the board and past officers of the American Diabetes Association who are committed to ensuring the well-being of diabetes patients across the country. NDVLC is committed to improving the quality of life for all.