

August 3, 2022

The Honorable John Barrasso, M.D.
United States Senate
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Barrasso,

On behalf of The US Oncology Network (The Network), which represents more than 10,000 oncology physicians, nurses, clinicians, and cancer care specialists nationwide, I write to express strong support for your amendment to the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which would hold providers harmless from adverse impacts resulting from the bill's prescription drug negotiation provisions.

The Network is one of the nation's largest and most innovative networks of community-based oncology providers, treating more than 1.2 million cancer patients annually in more than 450 locations across 25 states. The Network unites over 1,400 like-minded physicians around a common vision of expanding patient access to the highest quality, state-of-the-art care close to home and at lower costs for patients and the health care system.

The IRA's drug negotiation provisions direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate a Maximum Fair Price for certain drugs without market competition in Medicare Parts B and D. The provisions also alter the manner in which providers are reimbursed for administering those medications and could result in unintended consequences to patient care. While we appreciate efforts to reduce patient out-of-pocket costs that often lead to financial toxicity, healthcare providers would be stuck in the middle of the IRA's negotiation process, which could ultimately threaten patient access to care.

The community-based setting offers cancer patients access to high-quality, cost-effective care in a location convenient to their home, family, caregivers, and support systems. Over the past decade, rising financial pressures have contributed to the closure of many community oncology practices, leaving patients with few options but to receive care in a less convenient, more costly setting. Today, providers are facing numerous challenges related to rising inflation, workforce shortages, the long term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and looming Medicare payment reductions.

The IRA's drug negotiation provisions are unprecedented and wide ranging. They will have downstream impacts on providers, creating additional uncertainty and reimbursement pressures. If care continues to shift from the community setting to more expensive hospital settings, costs will increase for patients, the Medicare program, and the overall U.S. health system, which would be opposite of the bill's intent.

The Barrasso Amendment would ensure patients receive the full benefit of lower prescription drug costs without unfairly penalizing providers. On behalf of the nation's leading community cancer care providers, we appreciate your recognition of the financial pressures facing independent providers today and thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,



Ben Jones
Vice President, Government Relations and Public Policy
The US Oncology Network