

November 1, 2021



The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader, U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader, United States Senate  
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader, United States Senate  
Washington, D.C., 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Republican Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, and members of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate :

We are writing to you as the American Medical Student Association, a medical student run organization who has advocated for improved patient care policies for decades. We represent over 20,000 medical and premedical students in the United States. As future physicians for this country, many of the provisions of the Build Back Better Act (H.R. 5376) will affect our day to day practice, and the lives of our patients.

There are many elements currently included in the bill that will help more of our patients live healthier lives and make our lives and work as physicians better and easier. Specifically, we are encouraged by the inclusion of:

- Closing the Medicaid coverage gap in US territories and non-Medicaid expansion states while extending ACA marketplace subsidies
- Expanding home care for seniors and people with disabilities, and improving worker pay
- Adding hearing coverage to Medicare
- Lowering higher education costs
- Tackling climate change in job producing, meaningful ways

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Over the last few days important provisions like tuition-free community college, Medicare vision coverage, and paid family leave were withdrawn from the bill. AMSA will continue working with our allies to secure future funding for these programs. You can see our past statement [here](#). Unfortunately, the current draft of HR: 5376 has effectively removed the most important aspect of this legislation for American healthcare: to allow **Medicare to negotiate drug prices**. This provision, along with reintroducing **dental coverage** to go along with hearing coverage, **must be restored**.

**At AMSA we believe health care is a right, not a privilege, and we know life-saving medicines only work if patients can afford to take them.** We also know the pharmaceutical industry is the most profitable industry in the world, and that large drugmakers could [lose \\$1 trillion in sales and still be the most profitable industry](#).

**For the health of our patients, we are calling on you to use this historic legislation to break the drug companies monopoly power to set their own prices, and restore meaningful provisions requiring them to negotiate lower drug prices with Medicare.** This provision will do more for our patients on a day to day basis than any other. We can no longer sit back and watch these companies cheat the American public out of hundreds of billions of dollars.

We also urge you to reintroduce dental coverage to Medicare. Dental care is an essential service that costs individual Medicare users up to thousands of dollars a year in [out-of-pocket costs](#). In 2018, there were 9.5 million Medicare beneficiaries unable to access dental, vision, or hearing care with over 70% citing cost. At minimum, restoring dental coverage to the Build Back Better Act should be a priority to diminish the impact of this financial burden on millions of vulnerable Americans.

This bill has the potential to be the most impactful healthcare legislation in a generation and change the lives of millions for the better. As the finalities of this bill are discussed, AMSA urges you to include dental coverage for Medicare beneficiaries and restore the ability for Medicare to negotiate all drug prices. Limiting negotiation to only Part B drugs or drugs that are already off-patent will leave out far too many life-saving medicines and feed into the cycle of skyrocketing prescription drug prices that has already devastated too many of our patients.

Respectfully yours,



Hannah M. Hendrix  
National President, American Medical Student Association

**About the American Medical Student Association:**

AMSA is the oldest and largest independent association of physicians-in-training in the United States. Founded in 1950, AMSA is a student-governed, non-profit organization committed to representing physicians-in-training, advocating for quality and affordable health care for all, and building the next generation of physician leaders. To join our community, visit [amsa.org](https://amsa.org).