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AARP Outlines Priorities to President-elect Trump

Includes Protection of Social Security, Medicare Benefits, Access to Affordable Health Care, Prescription Costs

WASHINGTON, DC—In a letter to President-elect Donald J. Trump, AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins outlines AARP's priorities for Americans age 50 and older including protecting Medicare and Social Security, ensuring access to affordable health care coverage, and lowering the cost of prescription drugs.

In the letter Jenkins writes to President-elect Trump that "Our nearly 38 million members nationwide and all older Americans are counting on you to protect their Medicare and Social Security benefits, protect their access to affordable health care, and to tackle the high cost of prescription drugs. Throughout the campaign, your statements on these important issues of health and financial security set you apart from many other candidates. Now, as you assume office, older Americans are looking to you to protect them from efforts to cut their benefits, increase their costs, or otherwise harm the crucial programs they rely on."

The full text of the letter to President-elect Trump is below:

President-elect Donald J. Trump
Presidential Transition Headquarters
Washington, DC

Dear President-elect Trump:

Congratulations on your election. We look forward to working with you on your campaign promises to America's seniors. Our nearly 38 million members nationwide and all older Americans are counting on you to protect their Medicare and Social Security benefits, protect their access to affordable health care, and to tackle the high cost of prescription drugs. Throughout the campaign, your statements on these important issues of health and financial security set you apart from many other candidates. Now, as you assume office, older Americans are looking to you to protect them from efforts to cut their benefits, increase their costs, or otherwise harm the crucial programs they rely on.

Medicare and Social Security

Our members count on these programs and they believe Social Security and Medicare must be protected and strengthened for today's seniors and future generations. Unfortunately, some congressional leaders have discussed plans to use the health care debate to fundamentally change the Medicare program and undermine the contract made with generations of Americans. Proposals creating a defined contribution premium-support program; restricting access by raising the age of eligibility; or allowing hospitals and providers to arbitrarily charge consumers higher prices than Medicare; all betray the promise made to older Americans who have paid into Medicare their entire working lives. Indeed, these proposals do little to actually lower the cost of health care. Rather, they simply shift costs from Medicare onto individuals – many of whom cannot afford to pay more for their care. Again, we are ready to stand with you to oppose attempts to cut the Medicare program or otherwise harm seniors.

The average senior, with an annual income of under \$25,000 and already spending one out of every six dollars on health care, counts on Social Security for the majority of their income and on Medicare for access to affordable health coverage. We will continue to oppose changes to current law that cut benefits, increase costs, or reduce the ability of these critical programs to deliver on their benefit promises. We urge you to continue to do so as well.

Prescription Drugs

Older Americans use prescription drugs more than any other segment of the U.S. population, typically on a chronic basis. In 2015, retail prices for 268 brand name prescription drugs widely used by older Americans increased by an average of 15.5 percent. In contrast, the general inflation rate was 0.1 percent over the same period. For older adults, affordable prescription drugs are critical in managing their chronic conditions, curing diseases, keeping them healthy and improving their quality of life. As you have stated, older Americans and the American people deserve a better deal on prescription drug costs.

Again, we stand ready to work with you to lower drug prices. For example, AARP supports providing the Secretary of Health and Human Services with the authority to negotiate lower drug prices on behalf of millions of Medicare beneficiaries. In addition, we agree with you that we should reduce barriers to better pricing competition worldwide by allowing for the safe importation of lower priced drugs. American seniors should not

have to continue paying the highest Rx prices in the world.

Access to Health Care pre-Medicare

Millions of older Americans age 50 and older have gained access to affordable health coverage through important changes in the health insurance market, including the ban on pre-existing condition exclusions, the ban on lifetime and annual coverage limits, the restriction on charging working as well as retired older Americans many times more for insurance than younger persons (through important limits on age rating), and additional help for those who cannot afford insurance. We urge you to protect these vulnerable older Americans (many who have lost their jobs, are self-employed or own their own businesses) from losing health coverage by maintaining these important insurance market reforms in any new health legislation.

Medicaid and Long-Term Services and Supports

Medicaid serves as a critical safety net for millions of people in every state, including over 17 million children with disabilities, adults with disabilities and poor elderly who rely on vital Medicaid health and long-term care services. We urge you to continue to protect these vulnerable populations.

Efforts to reduce or cap Medicaid funding could endanger the health, safety, and care of millions of individuals who depend on the essential services provided through this program. Furthermore, caps would likely result in overwhelming cost-shifts to state governments unable to shoulder the costs of care without sufficient federal support. As your Administration considers changes to Medicaid, we urge that home and community-based services be available to individuals in the same way they can access nursing home funding. Any health law changes should ensure that more individuals are able to receive services in their homes and communities rather than costly institutional care.

We look forward to working with you to protect Medicare and Social Security, to lower prescription drug prices, and to maintain older American's affordable access to quality health coverage. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, or have your staff contact Joyce A. Rogers, Senior Vice President, Government Affairs at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,
Jo Ann C. Jenkins
Chief Executive Officer

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About AARP

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the world's largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.

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