



# 2023

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# YEAR IN REVIEW



**Partnership**  
for Part D Access



## MISSION

The mission of the Partnership is to maintain beneficiary access to the full range of available medications under Medicare Part D, particularly those included as part of the 6PC (anticonvulsants, antidepressants, antipsychotics, antineoplastics, antiretrovirals, and immunosuppressants), and ensure patients who are most vulnerable and sensitive to medication choices continue to have access to the treatment that best meets their health care needs. A fundamental priority for the Partnership is to successfully communicate the value of the 6PC policy to policymakers, and ensure patient access, including the unique value of the collaborative decision-making process between the patient and provider, remains intact. Access to the full suite of protected class therapies is an essential component of enabling patients and providers to effectively manage complex medical needs and comorbidities between the classes. We facilitate, support, and manage Congressional efforts that recognize that patients require access to all the medications in the six protected classes.

In achieving this mission, the Partnership uses a multi-faceted approach to oppose legislative and regulatory policy proposals that could diminish or deny patient access to the lifesaving drugs included within the 6PC. Additionally, the Partnership works to proactively advance policy approaches that will further cement the protected status of the 6PC within Medicare Part D.

# 2023 WORK

The Steering Committee of the Partnership supported an effort to revamp and improve the strategic goals for 2023 given the changing landscape on Capitol Hill and in the Administration. Below, we review progress toward those four goals outlined in our action plan.

## 2023 Coalition Action Plan

| Goal       | Build and Strengthen Champions  | Increase Congressional Engagement  | Increase Inside-the-Beltway Awareness                | Solidify Administration Support                                  |
|------------|---|--|--|--|
| Strategies | Identify new champions and deepen commitment of existing champions              | Broad education and awareness campaign   | Select public relations and strategic communications | Direct advocacy and identifying additional champions             |
| Activities | Engage Congressional relevant caucus co-chairs; patient meetings with champions | Staff briefings; Dissemination of new materials; Select patient testimonials; patient-centered hill advocacy | Op-eds; social media campaigns; website refresh      | Direct engagement with Administration and key policy influencers |



# BUILD AND STRENGTHEN CHAMPIONS

## Annual Targets

- Introduction of House resolution and gathering of cosponsors
- Identify 4 new Congressional champions

Support for the 6PC policy historically has been strong. In previous Congresses, champions for the 6PC have come to patients' defense against threats to the policy by speaking out and sending letters to the Executive Branch. These letters garnered the support of dozens of Members of Congress.

However, a significant period of time had elapsed since the last major threat to the 6PC, meaning that the Partnership had not had to call on champions to take major action. Therefore, the Partnership sought alternative routes to shore up that support in 2023 and keep the importance of the 6PC policy front and center with already-aligned members of the House. Initially, the Partnership was aligned around the imminent re-introduction of a Congressional resolution by the co-chairs of the Congressional Mental Health Caucus that outlined support for the 6PC.

As of this writing, member retirements and political obstacles to bipartisanship have delayed the introduction of this resolution. We are also monitoring Congressional hearing activity in search of opportunities for allied members to ask questions live or for the record.



## INCREASE CONGRESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

### Annual Targets

- Conduct 2 Hill briefings
- Complete 100 Hill meetings
- Secure a public statement of support in the Senate

Considering the groundswell of newly elected House members and newly appointed to committees of jurisdiction, the Partnership undertook an extensive effort to meet with as many key members and staff as possible.

The coalition engaged with 52 offices through virtual Hill meetings with patient advocates and material distribution.

**65%**

House Committee  
on Energy &  
Commerce/Ways &  
Means Members

Members who serve  
on the Health  
Subcommittee

**62%**

**42%**

Members who  
served on one or  
more relevant  
caucuses

The initial impetus for these meetings was the imminent re-introduction of a Congressional resolution by the co-chairs of the Congressional Mental Health Caucus, in support of the 6PC. As of this writing, member retirements and political obstacles to bipartisanship have delayed the introduction of this resolution. Regardless, the Partnership has worked to leverage the Congressional outreach made in the first half of this year by conducting a targeted series of online and in-person Hill briefings, many in partnership with key Congressional caucus chairs. We plan to continue these briefings apace in 2024.

Our Congressional outreach efforts – both Hill meetings and our continuing series of briefings – involved widespread, yet strategic, involvement from patient advocacy organizations inside the Partnership. Venn Strategies built a power map scoring system to rank the 100 members most likely to support our position and worked with the Partnership Steering Committee to launch an educational campaign about the importance of the six protected classes.

## INCREASE CONGRESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

In 2023, the Partnership hosted a series of Congressional briefings, Threats to Patient Access to Vital Medications, to continue education and outreach to Hill staffers. The goal of these briefings was to help amplify an urgent narrative to preserve current policy around Medicare's 6PC. The coalition hosted two in August and partnered with the Congressional Mental Health Caucus for a briefing in September and with the House Cancer Caucus in October. To date, we have engaged more than 100 people in our virtual briefings, the vast majority of whom are Senate and House staff.

The Partnership worked to ensure widespread support of the effort among patient advocacy organizations involved in the effort, working diligently with these groups to populate briefing panels, participate in Hill meetings, and inform pending grassroots efforts. These activities will be integral to our Partnership strategy in 2024 and beyond.



### Threats to Patient Access to Vital Medications A 6PC Policy Briefing Series

- August 2nd
- August 16th
- September 27th
  - *(In Conjunction with the Congressional Mental Health Caucus)*
- October 19th
  - *(In Collaboration with the House Cancer Caucus)*
- November 17th
  - *(Clinician Expert Panel)*

# INCREASE INSIDE-THE-BELTWAY SUPPORT

## Annual Targets

- Draft and place 2 patient-focused op-eds
- Collect 2-3 patient stories/testimonials
- Refresh website with updated messaging/narratives
- Grow coalition membership by 2-3 new organizations

Our pillars of Congressional outreach and briefings, directed at a particularly important Beltway audience, have also been supplemented by our social media presence; we have nearly **1,300 Twitter/X followers** as of this writing and aim to grow that follower count through 2024. In addition, nearly a half dozen of our members have agreed to draft or have drafted opinion editorials (op-ed), meant for placement in Washington media outlets.

In conjunction with World AIDS Day on December 1, 2023, the Partnership successfully secured the placement of an op-ed focused on the importance of the 6PC policy in the Washington Blade, both in print and online editions. This op-ed, authored by Dr. James Sosman, reflects the coalition's dedication to promoting informed discussions and influencing policy discourse at the intersection of healthcare, advocacy, and media engagement.

Moreover, we are anticipating communication from STAT regarding the potential publication of an op-ed in the new year, presenting the viewpoint of a transplant patient.

In 2023, the Partnership created a steady cadence of communications activity to ensure that the 6PC and the medication access provided thereby, stay in the public policy dialogue in and around Capitol Hill. In addition to a social media presence, an #ICYMI newsletter was created to provide timely updates to interested individuals on and off the Hill; the list contains emails from over **150 Hill staffers, patient advocacy organizations**, and aligned industry representatives. In 2024, we are focused on growing our Twitter/"X" followers and newly-created LinkedIn account and staying in the public policy dialogue around 6PC.



## SOLIDIFY ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT

### Annual Targets

- Conduct at least 1 meeting with CMS staff
- Identify additional supporters willing to be vocal about the importance of the 6PC policy

In 2021-2022, staff from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of the Secretary indicated to the Partnership that the importance of the 6PC was understood by President Biden. In addition, senior official Jonathan Blum was quoted as saying that the 6PC were “settled policy.” Nonetheless, with the upcoming Part D redesign authorized by the Inflation Reduction Act, increasing the Partnership’s visibility with the Administration is critical.

In the late Spring, we became aware that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services released a limited solicitation for comments on Part D redesign. Under the changes, liability for plans will increase significantly, especially for patients who reach the catastrophic phase, which includes many who take drugs in the 6PC. Given that Avalere’s reports indicate that the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) may be lightening enforcement of the requirement even before this increased liability, the Partnership decided to act. In August, the Partnership sent a letter to CMS outlining our recommendations to ensure that the agency continues to uphold the law and require Part D plans to cover drugs in the protected classes. Following the transmission of that letter, the proposed Part D rule was transmitted to the Office of Management and Budget.

Key patient groups and representatives from the Partnership conducted a meeting with the Office of Management and Budget, CMS, and the White House on October 4th to advocate for the 6PC during Part D redesign and suggest specific steps the agency could take in the rulemaking context.



## SOLIDIFY ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT



Cheri Rice  
Deputy Director, Center for Medicare  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

Vanessa Duran  
Acting Director, Medicare Drug Benefit and C & D Data Group  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION — [PartDPolicy@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:PartDPolicy@cms.hhs.gov); [PartDBenefits@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:PartDBenefits@cms.hhs.gov)

RE: CY 2025 Part D Redesign

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing patients and clinicians across the country, we write with important recommendations to bear in mind when undertaking Part D redesign provisions from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). We represent the millions of Americans that rely upon their Medicare Part D drug benefit to help manage their health conditions, including mental illness, organ transplants, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, Tourette syndrome, lupus, cancer, and HIV.

## CONTINUED NEED

Over the past decade of the 6PC policy, the need for vigilance has never abated. With increasing financial pressure across the Medicare program and the private sector insurers, the policy will always be a target. We are particularly concerned about:

The actions of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for the Inflation Reduction Act's Part D redesign; actions of Medicare Advantage and standalone Part D plans in designing plans to respond to the Part D redesign's liabilities and incentives;

Congress' polarization around the Inflation Reduction Act, especially the House of Representatives, preventing bipartisan action around the 6PC;

The Medicare Payment Advisory Committee (MedPAC)'s continued promulgation of reports assessing the potential impact of potential changes to the "six protected classes", including further consideration of utilization management practices.

As the pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) industry remains under Congressional scrutiny, observers have noted PBM leaders' subtle but definitive advocacy to weaken the 6PC. These comments appeared twice in written Congressional testimony this year, as well as industry events. As Part D redesign policy is announced and implemented, we expect that insurers and PBMs will be under notable cost pressures and will be eager to leverage any cost-cutting tool they can – 6PC among them.