

Dear Senator Manchin,

As fellow West Virginians, we appreciate your continued focus on behalf of our state in the ongoing reconciliation discussion. **We believe, however, that allowing Medicare to include dental, vision, hearing is critical for our communities and must be included in the final package.**

Too many older adults in West Virginia do not have necessary access to dental care, with extremely harmful results. 47% of older adults in the state had not seen a dentist in over a year, even before the pandemic, and 26% have lost all of their natural teeth – making it the worst in the nation – because timely oral health care was too expensive. **By ensuring a dental benefit in Medicare, nearly 450,000 older adults and people with disabilities in West Virginia would not only get important dental care, but also would be healthier, have lower health care costs, be better able to get and keep jobs, and have an easier time overcoming social isolation.**

This policy isn't just important for health, financial security, and economy in our state, it is one that is overwhelmingly popular. **8 in 10 West Virginia voters surveyed in July supported adding a dental benefit to Medicare, like the one proposed in the reconciliation package – including 73% of conservative voters.** Over 9 in 10 respondents agreed that dental care is a necessary part of overall health care and about half of respondents hold their members of Congress responsible for the current lack of coverage. We appreciate that being a representative for all West Virginians has long been a value you hold as senator, and adding a dental benefit to Medicare would be very much in line with that value.

As you continue negotiating on final details for the reconciliation package, we strongly urge you to support dental coverage in Medicare. It is a policy deeply needed by our communities, and one that the people of West Virginia are demanding.

Sincerely,

American Friends Service Committee of
West Virginia

NASW WV

Planned Parenthood South Atlantic

Rise Up WV

West Virginia Alliance for Retired Americans

West Virginia Dental Hygienists' Association

West Virginia Oral Health Coalition

West Virginians for Affordable Health Care

WV Citizen Action Group

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