



*Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515*

*Anna G. Eshoo
Eighteenth District
California*

January 19, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra, Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra,

I'm writing to you about the federal government's commitment to expanding the necessary number of COVID-19 diagnostic tests for publicly insured Americans. While I'm very pleased by the Administration's announcement to expand free at-home COVID-19 tests for privately insured Americans, I believe the reimbursement policy should extend to Medicare beneficiaries, and I urge you to take immediate action to ensure that those covered by Medicare have the same cost-free access to these critically necessary at-home COVID-19 diagnostic tests.

Broad access to diagnostic testing for COVID-19 is a critical component of our nation's comprehensive strategy to effectively identify and mitigate the spread of this virus, especially as new variants continue to emerge. I commend the Administration's efforts of offering four free individual tests per residential address. However, I am disappointed that the reimbursement option for eight additional at-home tests per month per person only applies to those with private or group health insurance. Without comparable benefits available through Medicare, more than 18 percent of our nation's population will be made to pay out-of-pocket for additional at-home COVID-19 tests. Americans enrolled in Medicare are among the most susceptible and vulnerable to infection, so it's paramount that this population is given priority access to routine critical testing measures.

Enhanced access to at-home diagnostic tests can help us better identify and isolate cases of COVID-19, and in turn, reduce the spread and adverse outcomes from this virus. The Administration's current proposal to distribute more tests to community sites and rural communities for publicly and uninsured Americans does not give appropriate consideration for homebound individuals or individuals with disabilities under Medicare. Additionally, the requirement for Medicare beneficiaries to rely on a health care professional's order to access a laboratory test – at a limit of one test per year – is simply insufficient. Experts have identified that rapid at-home tests are a critically important

public health intervention. The comfort and convenience of these tests in one's own home can help people better manage their risks and quickly take action to prevent further spread of this virus as we go deeper into a bleak winter with the Omicron variant.

I urge you to close the gap that presently exists with our publicly supported safety net health programs. Congress has already taken several steps to promote access to testing during this pandemic, and I stand ready to work with you to ensure that *every* American has the same fundamental access to these life-saving diagnostics tools.

Sincerely,

and gratefully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anna Eshoo", with a large, sweeping flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress