

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 17, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi,

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the shortfalls in our health care system, including the need for improved access to, and understanding of, palliative and hospice care. We write to request that efforts to grow, improve and sustain the palliative care and hospice workforce to keep pace with patient need and to help improve the well-being of Americans with serious illnesses and their families be included in the upcoming reconciliation package.

Palliative care and hospice care focus on relieving and preventing patients' suffering and improving their quality of life. This interprofessional team-based approach focuses on the patients' needs, explains treatment options and gives patients and their families a voice in realizing their treatment goals, and serves as a critical component of high quality, coordinated, person-centered care. Over the last decade, the number of hospital-based palliative care programs has quickly increased, but the number of providers available to fulfill the needs of these patients has not kept pace. Furthermore, many patients and care providers are not aware of the benefits and options for palliative and hospice care.

Unfortunately, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for quality palliative and hospice care has only grown more pronounced. Hospitals have treated thousands of seriously-ill patients under extremely stressful circumstances, and patients and their families have faced incredibly difficult decisions, often without the necessary guidance or expertise of a palliative care team.

Now is the time to address the needs of patients facing serious illness and their families. To ensure access to palliative and hospice care for those who need it, we must support an interprofessional, team-based approach to care, and make the needed investments in the palliative care and hospice workforce. These investments must include efforts to address workforce development; health care provider training, including for physicians, nurses, and other

health professionals; enhanced research; academic and career incentive awards; and increased education and awareness. The bipartisan Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act, introduced in the 116th Congress (S.2080/H.R. 647), should be used as a model for our efforts.

We look forward to working together to respond to this critical need. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Tammy Baldwin in blue ink.

Tammy Baldwin
U.S. Senator

Handwritten signature of Yvette D. Clarke in black ink, with "M.C." written in small letters to the right.

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress