



October 18, 2017

Mr. Bill Casey
Chair and Members, Standing Committee on Health
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Chair Casey and Committee Members:

I am contacting you on behalf of the Best Medicines Coalition, a national alliance of 25 patient organizations with a shared vision of equitable and consistent access to safe and effective drugs which improve patient outcomes. As you and your Standing Committee on Health colleagues continue your pharmacare study, including the *Federal Cost of a National Pharmacare Program Report* by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, we urge you to consider pharmaceutical care as a critical policy issue in dire need of national leadership and significant reform.

As you and your Committee have learned, Canada's current drug coverage framework cannot be described as a system as it is rife with inconsistencies and inequities resulting in compromised care and outcomes at great cost to individuals, their families, health care systems and society. The patient communities represented by our coalition feel the impacts of this fractured labyrinth every day. All too often Canadians are unable to access the treatments they need at all or in a timely fashion, facing restrictive criteria impeding access and the challenges of navigating bureaucratic mazes to get necessary medicines. Many Canadians fall through the cracks, particularly those who do not qualify for public programs or private insurance. As the Parliamentary Budget Office Report noted, fully 3.6 million Canadians have inadequate coverage and therefore do not get the care they need and that is in addition to the 700,000 who have no coverage at all. This must be addressed by Parliament, Legislatures and the federal, provincial and territorial governments.

As patient groups we seek meaningful consultation leading to reform which truly improves the lives of Canadians. We welcome the Parliamentary Budget Office Report as providing valuable insights through costing analysis. By no means does the report provide an implementation model or a full review of all possible program, access or funding frameworks. Importantly, we ask that your Committee consider whether the National Pharmacare Program outlined meets key patient-based principles, including fully addressing inequities and provision of a high standard of care with an array of therapeutic options for all types of conditions. The concept of "the right medication at the right time" must be a central premise of reform, enabling patients to benefit from medications most appropriate for them. The Best Medicines Coalition's *Equitable Pharmaceutical Care: Principles and Considerations Regarding Pharmacare for All Canadians*, outlining elements necessary to meet patient needs and improve care, is enclosed for your consideration. We offer our insights and services as patient groups to assist your Committee in its work.

Quite simply, no Canadian should be left without the means to obtain medicines that a health care professional has deemed medically necessary – a core belief that we are certain you share. We call on your committee to recommend national leadership on this issue, with full and meaningful consultation and the inclusion of patient-based principles to ensure that reform leads to improved care for all Canadians. As always, the Best Medicines Coalition is available to meet or present evidence and share perspectives. Thank you for your work on behalf of Canadians on this important issue.

Yours sincerely,

John Adams
Chair, Best Medicines Coalition
Encl.