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999 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 400
Atlanta GA 30309
www.GeorgiaCancerInfo.org

July 26, 2023

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Department of Health and Human Services
Attention: CMS-1784-P
P.O. Box 8016
Baltimore, MD 21244-8016

Dear CMS Administrator,

I write in support of proposed rule change CMS-1784-P addressing changes to the Provider Fee Schedule (PFS) to establish coding and payment for Principal Illness Navigation services to assist cancer patients and patients with other serious illnesses. This rule change would allow these medically necessary services performed through hospitals, physician practices, and community-based organizations to be eligible for payment.

The Georgia Center for Oncology Research and Education is a statewide nonprofit with a mission of advancing cancer research and improving cancer care throughout our state. In 2009, Georgia CORE and the Georgia Society of Clinical Oncology established the Cancer Patient Navigators of Georgia (CPNG), a free-of-charge organization where cancer patient navigators can learn, connect, and share best practices to better navigate their patients through their cancer journey. This organization currently serves nearly 300 patient navigators, nurse navigators, community health workers, and social workers to enhance their ability to assist patients and their caregivers.

In many cases, hospitals, physician practices, and community-based organizations currently bear the cost of providing these services because the patient need is great, and evidence has shown that these services result in better patient outcomes. Approval of coding and payment for community health services and patient navigation supports patient-centered care and advances health equity by allowing employers to expand these services to those who need it the most, particularly rural and underserved populations without sufficient access to live-saving care.

This recommendation from President Biden's Cancer Moonshot initiative will be an enormous benefit to Medicare patients experiencing what may be the toughest battle of their lives. Increasing access to underserved populations for navigation services will help patients communicate with their healthcare providers, make appointments for doctor visits and medical tests, and connect them to social support and other resources vital to coordinated care and successful treatment.

On behalf of Georgia CORE and the Cancer Patient Navigators of Georgia, I urge your approval of this proposed rule change to provide coding and payment for Principal Illness Navigation services to Medicare patients.

Sincerely,

Lynn M. Durham
President and CEO