

No. 24-1819

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**UNITED STATES COURT OF  
APPEALS FOR THE THIRD CIRCUIT**

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ASTRAZENECA PHARMACEUTICALS LP,  
*Plaintiff-Appellants,*

v.

XAVIER BECERRA, ET AL.,  
*Defendants-Appellees.*

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On appeal from the United States District Court  
for the District of Delaware  
No. 1:23-cv-00931-CFC,  
Judge Colm F. Connolly

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**BRIEF OF NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED HEALTHCARE AND  
MEDICARE EXPERTS AS *AMICI CURIAE* IN SUPPORT OF  
DEFENDANTS-APPELLEES**

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**STATEMENT OF INTEREST OF *AMICI CURIAE*<sup>1</sup>**

The following *Amici* are eight nationally recognized experts in healthcare, healthcare finance, and Medicare, who place a high value on the financial stability of the Medicare program which is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. As experts in healthcare and Medicare, *Amici* are qualified to explain how the recently enacted Drug Price Negotiation Program is consistent with the Government's well-established power to leverage its purchasing authority to constrain excessive fees charged to federal healthcare programs.

- **Stuart Altman, PhD** is the former Chairman of the Prospective Payment Assessment Commission (now the Congressional Medicare Payment Advisory Commission or MedPAC). Mr. Altman also served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation/Health at the U.S. Department of Health Education and Welfare and as a member of the National Bipartisan Commission on the Future of Medicare.
- **Robert A. Berenson, MD** is the former Director of Health Plans and Providers, Health Care Financing Administration (the predecessor to Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services). Dr. Berenson also served as Vice Chair of MedPAC.
- **Donald Berwick, MD** is a former Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Dr. Berwick also served as the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, a non-profit organization.

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<sup>1</sup> All parties have consented to the filing of this brief. No party's counsel authored this brief in whole or in part. No one other than *Amici* or their counsel contributed any money to fund its preparation or submission.



- **David Blumenthal, MD** is the former National Coordinator for Health Information Technology. Dr. Blumenthal is also the former President of the Commonwealth Fund.
- **Francis J. Crosson, MD** is the former Chairman of MedPAC. Dr. Crosson also served on the National Advisory Committee of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.
- **Paul Ginsburg, PhD** is the former Executive Director at the Physician Payment Review Commission (the predecessor to MedPAC). Dr. Ginsburg also served as Vice Chair of MedPAC and Deputy Assistant Director of the Congressional Budget Office.
- **Marilyn Moon, PhD** is the former Public Trustee for the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds. Dr. Moon also served as Chair of the Maryland Health Care Commission.
- **Bruce Vladeck, PhD** is the former Administrator of the Health Care Financing Administration (the predecessor to Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services). Dr. Vladeck also served on the National Bipartisan Commission on the Future of Medicare.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In 2022, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) paid \$944 billion to provide healthcare services to the elderly and disabled through the federal Medicare program. A program of this size is possible only because Congress has authorized CMS to manage costs. Over the past 50 years, federal legislation has empowered CMS to pay hospitals, physicians, and other providers much less for their services than they would receive from commercial insurance. In fact, prescription drugs are the only major component of Medicare that has not been subject to meaningful cost controls. In 2022, to address astronomical—and quickly

growing—drug costs, Congress has enacted the Drug Price Negotiation Program (DPNP) to give the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) limited authority to negotiate the prices Medicare pays for some of the highest-spending covered drugs. With respect to these select few prescription drugs, for some of their drugs the DPNP finally puts some drug manufacturers in a position similar to that of Medicare-participating providers and physicians.

In challenging the DPNP, AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals LP and AstraZeneca AB (collectively, “AstraZeneca”) essentially attack the Government’s ability to run the Medicare program. The *Amici*, nationally recognized experts in healthcare, healthcare finance, and Medicare, submit this brief to explain: that ensuring prescription drug price affordability is essential to the financial stability of the Medicare program; that the authority conferred on CMS by the DPNP to negotiate drug prices for the Medicare program is consistent with the authority that Congress has given CMS to limit excessive prices of other Medicare services; that this authority is also consistent with that given to other agencies to limit drug prices in other federal government programs; and, finally, that the courts have uniformly rejected challenges to the federal authority to limit prices for drugs and services paid by federal healthcare programs.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **A. The Medicare Program**

As the largest single purchaser of healthcare in the United States, the Medicare program pays one in every five healthcare dollars spent.<sup>2</sup> Today, more than 67 million elderly or disabled Americans rely on Medicare for government-funded health insurance, which covers both healthcare services and prescription drugs for eligible beneficiaries.<sup>3</sup> *See generally* 42 U.S.C. § 1395. Traditional Medicare contains two parts: Part A covers services provided by hospitals and other institutional care providers, while Part B pays for outpatient services, including outpatient hospital services, physician visits, diagnostic tests and lab services, and drugs administered by physicians. Part B covers a relatively small number of drugs (635 in 2022), which are typically administered through infusion or injection.<sup>4</sup> Under

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<sup>2</sup> *See* Meena Seshamani et al., *Building on the CMS Strategic Vision: Working Together for a Stronger Medicare*, CMS (Jan. 11, 2022), <https://www.cms.gov/blog/building-cms-strategic-vision-working-together-stronger-medicare#:~:text=As%20the%20largest%20single%20purchaser,force%20in%20the%20United%20States>.

<sup>3</sup> *See Medicare Monthly Enrollment*, CMS (May 2024), <https://data.cms.gov/summary-statistics-on-beneficiary-enrollment/medicare-and-medicare-reports/medicare-monthly-enrollment>.

<sup>4</sup> *Drug Coverage Under Different Parts of Medicare 1*, CMS (Mar. 2023), <https://www.cms.gov/outreach-and-education/outreach/partnerships/downloads/11315-p.pdf>; *see Medicare Part B Spending by Drug*, CMS (last modified June 13, 2024),

Part B, Medicare enrollees are often saddled with significant drug costs. Once beneficiaries reach their deductible (\$240 in 2024), they pay 20% coinsurance on Part B drugs.<sup>5</sup>

CMS contracts with insurance plans to offer Medicare participants benefits under Part C.<sup>6</sup> Under Part C, Medicare beneficiaries can obtain benefits covered under Part A and Part B, plus additional benefits, typically including the Part D prescription drug benefit. Medicare payments to Part C plans are based on a percent of average per capita spending in traditional Medicare (which ranges from 95% to 115%).<sup>7</sup>

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<https://data.cms.gov/summary-statistics-on-use-and-payments/medicare-medicaid-spending-by-drug/medicare-part-b-spending-by-drug>.

<sup>5</sup> This copay will decrease under a provision of the Inflation Reduction Act which limits beneficiaries' coinsurance responsibility when a drug's price increases have outpaced inflation. Although many of Medicare's enrollees purchase supplemental insurance to defray the costs of coinsurance or are covered by Medicaid or retiree plans, over three million individuals are left to cover these costs on their own. See Nancy Ochieng et al., *A Snapshot of Sources of Coverage Among Medicare Beneficiaries*, Kaiser Fam. Found. (Dec. 13, 2023), <https://www.kff.org/medicare/issue-brief/a-snapshot-of-sources-of-coverage-among-medicare-beneficiaries/>.

<sup>6</sup> See *Health Plans – General Information*, CMS (last updated Mar. 5, 2024), [https://www.cms.gov/medicare/health-plans/healthplansgeninfo#:~:text=The%20Balanced%20Budget%20Act%20of,\)%20program%2C%20effective%20January%201999](https://www.cms.gov/medicare/health-plans/healthplansgeninfo#:~:text=The%20Balanced%20Budget%20Act%20of,)%20program%2C%20effective%20January%201999).

<sup>7</sup> See *Medicare Advantage Program Payment System*, Medicare Payment Advisory Comm'n (revised Nov. 2021), [https://www.medpac.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/medpac\\_payment\\_basics\\_21\\_ma\\_final\\_sec.pdf](https://www.medpac.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/medpac_payment_basics_21_ma_final_sec.pdf).

In 2003, Congress established Medicare Part D, a prescription drug benefit which all Medicare recipients may purchase. Under Part D, Medicare subsidizes the cost of drugs administered outside of hospitals and outpatient facilities. 42 U.S.C. § 1395w-101. In Part D, Congress barred the federal government from participating in price negotiations between drug manufacturers or pharmacies and prescription drug plan sponsors through the “noninterference” clause. 42 U.S.C. § 1395w-111(i). In the years since the passage of Part D, however, it has become increasingly evident that although competition within the market for prescription drugs has largely succeeded at moderating the growth of costs for prescription drugs that face competition from generics or medications treating the same condition, market forces cannot curb prescription drug prices in the absence of competition.<sup>8</sup> This leaves Medicare with no leverage over excessive drug prices, which must be borne by Medicare’s beneficiaries and taxpayers.

Under Part D, beneficiaries’ financial responsibility for drugs depends on how much they spend on prescription drugs in a given plan year, and some beneficiaries spend thousands of dollars out-of-pocket before they hit the catastrophic coverage phase in which copays and coinsurance for drugs are significantly reduced. In 2019, beneficiaries paid more than \$16.1 billion out-of-pocket for Part D drugs, an increase

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<sup>8</sup> *Prescription Drugs: Spending, Use, and Prices* 16, Cong. Budget Off. (Jan. 2022), <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2022-01/57050-Rx-Spending.pdf>.

of 27% over the previous five years.<sup>9</sup> Unsurprisingly, in the same year, 23% of seniors reported difficulty affording their prescription drugs.<sup>10</sup> Beginning in 2025, out-of-pocket spending by beneficiaries for Part D will be capped at \$2,000 per year under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).<sup>11</sup>

Skyrocketing drug costs have also long plagued the program. In 2023, Medicare spent \$116 billion on Part D drugs—an increase of \$34 billion from 2018.<sup>12</sup> These increases are largely driven by brand-name, single-source drugs without generic competition, the average net price of which more than doubled from 2009 to 2018.<sup>13</sup> By 2019, these drugs “accounted for almost three quarters (72 percent) of total Part D spending[.]” H.R. Rep. No. 116-324, pt. 1, at 38 (2019).

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<sup>9</sup> *Frequently Asked Questions About Prescription Drug Pricing and Policy* 8–9, Cong. Rsch. Serv. (updated May 6, 2021), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44832/7>.

<sup>10</sup> See Ashley Kirzinger et al., *KFF Health Tracking Poll—February 2019: Prescription Drugs*, Kaiser Fam. Found. (Mar. 1, 2019), <https://www.kff.org/health-costs/poll-finding/kff-health-tracking-poll-february-2019-prescription-drugs/>.

<sup>11</sup> Bisma A. Sayed et al., *Inflation Reduction Act Research Series: Medicare Part D Enrollee Out-of-Pocket Spending: Recent Trends and Projected Impacts of the Inflation Reduction Act*, Assistant Sec. for Planning & Evaluation, U.S. Dep’t Health & Hum. Svcs., No. HP-2023-19 (July 7, 2023), <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/93a68f3c5ca949dcf331aa0ec24dd046/aspe-part-d-oop.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> *Compare Baseline Projections: Medicare*, Cong. Budget Off. (June 2024), <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2024-06/51302-2024-06-medicare.pdf>, with *Medicare-CBO’s May 2019 Baseline*, Cong. Budget Off. (May 2019), <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files?file=2019-05/51302-2019-05-medicare.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> *Prescription Drugs: Spending, Use, and Prices*, *supra* note 8, 16.

## **B. The Drug Price Negotiation Program**

Through the creation of the DPNP, Congress has begun the process of stemming the high costs and rapidly increasing prices of drugs for Medicare and its beneficiaries by allowing the Secretary of HHS to negotiate prices of a select number of the highest-spending drugs in Part D, and later, Part B. *See* Inflation Reduction Act, Pub. L. 117-169, 42 U.S.C. § 1320f (2022). On August 29, 2023, HHS selected 10 of the highest-spending, single-source, brand-name drugs that have been on the market for at least seven years (or 11 years for biologics).<sup>14</sup> *See* §§ 1320f-1(b)–(d). From October 1, 2023 until August 1, 2024, CMS and manufacturers of the selected drugs that chose to participate negotiated a price for each drug. *Id.* If CMS and the manufacturer agreed on a price during this period, the drug will become available to Part D at that price in 2026. 42 U.S.C. § 1320f-1(c)(2).

As outlined in more detail in Appellees’ brief, Appellees’ Opening Br. at 16–17, Doc. 37 (Sept. 12, 2024), drug manufacturers that do not wish to participate in negotiations or enter an agreement may transfer their interest in the selected drug to another entity; withdraw from Medicare Parts B and D and Medicaid, a joint federal and state program which helps cover medical costs for some people with limited

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<sup>14</sup> *See HHS Selects the First Drugs for Medicare Price Negotiation*, HHS (Aug. 29, 2023), <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2023/08/29/hhs-selects-the-first-drugs-for-medicare-drug-price-negotiation.html>.

income and resources (which is similar to the only option currently available to providers who choose not to accept Medicare rates); or pay an excise tax.

CMS is only empowered to select a drug for negotiation where that drug has had an unchallenged market position for at least seven years and is one of the highest spending drugs paid for by taxpayers and beneficiaries. For these drugs, Congress has designed a cautious negotiation process, which starts off with a small set of covered drugs under Part D and increases slowly to include some covered drugs under Part B. These innovations are expected to begin to address the precipitous recent rise in drug prices impacting both the Medicare program and beneficiaries. The Congressional Budget Office projects that the DPNP will save nearly \$100 billion in Medicare spending from 2026 to 2031—a significant savings, but a small percentage of what the program will spend on prescription drugs during that time.<sup>15</sup>

### **ARGUMENT**

The DPNP is consistent with the federal government's well-established ability to regulate the prices that the Medicare program pays for services by physicians, hospitals, and other providers. It is also consistent with the cost-controlling authority that Congress has afforded Medicaid, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Coast Guard, the Department of Defense (DoD), and the Vaccines for Children

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<sup>15</sup> See *Cost Estimate, Cong. Budget Off.* 5 (Sept. 7, 2022), [https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2022-09/PL117-169\\_9-7-22.pdf](https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2022-09/PL117-169_9-7-22.pdf).



Program, which are all entitled to significant discounts or rebates from drug companies when they purchase prescription drugs. Likewise, in the 340B Drug Program, Congress has required substantial discounts for drugs used by certain providers serving low-income populations. Congress has also limited prices for Part D drugs in certain circumstances through the Affordable Care Act (ACA). AstraZeneca has not distinguished these long-standing statutory authorities to establish prices from HHS's ability to likewise negotiate prescription drug prices paid by Medicare through the DPNP.

There is no support for AstraZeneca's argument that the DPNP violates its Fifth Amendment procedural due process rights. To the contrary, to our knowledge, every court to consider the issue has held that the decision to participate in Medicare is voluntary, and such participation does not create a constitutional property interest. Lastly, the DPNP's provision precluding judicial review is consistent with Congress's long-recognized authority to shield selected provisions of the Medicare program from judicial review.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For the reasons set forth in Appellees' Brief, AstraZeneca's argument that the DPNP violates the Administrative Procedure Act also fails. *See* Appellees' Br. at 28–47.

**A. Congress Has Provided HHS Broad Authority to Regulate the Prices Medicare Will Pay for Healthcare Services Other than Drugs.**

In its early years, the Medicare program was given limited authority to control costs. Under both Part A and Part B, healthcare providers were entitled to “reasonable costs” for hospital and institutional services or “usual, customary and reasonable charges” for physicians and other medical services.<sup>17</sup> But it soon became clear that without additional regulatory limits, Medicare’s original “reasonable cost” system was unsustainable. To protect taxpayers from having to pay excessive rates for Medicare services, Congress has amended these payment structures numerous times over the past 50 years, giving HHS increasing authority to curb costs. Thus, in 1972, six years after the Government first began paying Medicare providers, Congress limited reasonable costs and charges to the Medical Economic Index, which tracks the physician’s cost of doing business (as opposed to what the physician charges patients).<sup>18</sup>

In subsequent years, Congress began setting rates for reimbursement by adopting prospective payment systems for hospitals and fee schedules for physicians

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<sup>17</sup> *Medicare Primer* 3, Cong. Rsch. Serv. (May 21, 2020), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R40425/55>. Under this model, physicians were paid according to “the lowest of (1) the physician’s billed charge for the service, (2) the physician’s customary charge for the service, or (3) the prevailing charge for that service in the community.” *Id.* at 3 n.7.

<sup>18</sup> See Benson L. Dutton, Jr. & Peter McMenamin, *The Medicare Economic Index: Its Background and Beginnings*, Health Care Finance Rev. (Sept. 1981).

and other providers, which are updated annually and establish the payment rates for the following year.<sup>19</sup> In 1983, the Government began using the inpatient prospective payment system (IPPS) to set reimbursement rates for hospitals treating Medicare beneficiaries in acute inpatient settings, based on diagnosis-related groups (DRGs).<sup>20</sup> Under this methodology, the Medicare program establishes a fee schedule for the following year that pays hospitals a base payment amount (based on data from hospitals in the program), which includes payments for operating costs and capital expenses, subject to adjustments for geographic location, diagnoses, quality performance, and other factors.<sup>21</sup> The base IPPS payment amount is updated annually to account for inflation and other changes in the components of the rate.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Critical access hospitals (CAHs) represent a small statutory exception. Facilities with no more than 25 beds that primarily operate in rural settings, CAHs may bill Medicare for reasonable costs. *See Critical Access Hospitals Payment System*, Medicare Payment Advisory Comm’n (revised Nov. 2021), [https://www.medpac.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/medpac\\_payment\\_basics\\_21\\_cah\\_final\\_sec.pdf](https://www.medpac.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/medpac_payment_basics_21_cah_final_sec.pdf). As of October 2021, only about 1,300 hospitals nationwide were designated as CAHs.

<sup>20</sup> *See Medicare Hospital Payments: Adjusting for Variation in Geographic Area Wages*, Cong. Rsch. Serv. (Mar. 3, 2021), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46702>.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

Similarly, for services provided in hospital outpatient departments under Part B,<sup>23</sup> in 2000 CMS implemented the outpatient prospective payment system (OPPS) annually to set reimbursement rates for the subsequent year.<sup>24</sup> Using a coding system that classifies services based on their clinical attributes and cost, the OPPS sets payment rates by multiplying the average cost of services in the relevant classification by a wage-adjusted conversion factor.<sup>25</sup>

Today, Medicare also regulates the prices it pays physicians under Part B pursuant to the Medicare fee schedule (MFS).<sup>26</sup> The MFS is an administered price structure developed through a relatively complex formula grounded in elaborate data analyses. Relying on the same coding system used by the OPPS, the MFS generally sets payment rates by service—including everything from discrete services like injections to bundles of services for more complex procedures like surgeries.<sup>27</sup> The

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<sup>23</sup> The OPPS does not include payments for a physician's services. *See Outpatient Hospital Services Payment System*, Medicare Payment Advisory Comm'n (Oct. 2022), [https://www.medpac.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/MedPAC\\_Payment\\_Basics\\_22\\_OPD\\_FINAL\\_SEC\\_v3.pdf](https://www.medpac.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/MedPAC_Payment_Basics_22_OPD_FINAL_SEC_v3.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> *See Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1989 (OBRA 1989)*, Pub. L. 101-239, 103 STAT. 2106 (Dec. 29, 1989).

<sup>27</sup> *See Physician and Other Health Professional Payment System*, Medicare Payment Advisory Comm'n (Oct. 2022), [https://www.medpac.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/MedPAC\\_Payment\\_Basics\\_22\\_Physician\\_FINAL\\_SEC.pdf](https://www.medpac.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/MedPAC_Payment_Basics_22_Physician_FINAL_SEC.pdf).

MFS provides for far lower prices than what commercial insurers pay, with commercial insurers paying an average of 129% of MFS prices for physician services.<sup>28</sup> Medicare also regulates prices for services administered to beneficiaries of private plans under Part C, where plans are paid based on bids under a formula-based payment system, using benchmarks tied to the average spending under traditional Medicare per beneficiary under Parts A and B.<sup>29</sup> In addition to all these programs, throughout Medicare's history, Congress has repeatedly imposed additional limits on increases to hospital and physician payment rates.<sup>30</sup>

None of these payment systems is subject to negotiation. To the contrary, providers other than physicians who do not agree to these terms must totally opt out of the Medicare program. Physicians who do not contract with Medicare must accept a lower payment from the program.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Cohen et al., *The Prices That Commercial Health Insurers and Medicare Pay for Hospitals' and Physicians' Services* 6, Cong. Budget Off. (Jan. 2022), <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/57778>.

<sup>29</sup> See *Medicare Advantage Program Payment System*, *supra* note 7.

<sup>30</sup> See, e.g., Balanced Budget Act of 1997, Pub. L. No. 105-33, 111 STAT. 251 (Aug. 5, 1997); Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, Pub. L. No. 111-148 (2010), 124 STAT. 119 (Mar. 23, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> See Nancy Ochieng & Gabrielle Clerveau, *How Many Physicians Have Opted Out of the Medicare Program?*, Kaiser Fam. Found. (Sept. 11, 2023), <https://www.kff.org/medicare/issue-brief/how-many-physicians-have-opted-out-of-the-medicare-program/>.

## **B. Congress Has Empowered Federal Healthcare Programs Other than Medicare to Regulate Drug Prices.**

For more than 30 years, Congress has attempted to address the rapidly rising costs of drugs for patients and federal healthcare programs by placing significant restrictions on drug prices paid by Medicaid; all direct federal purchasers of drugs; federal healthcare programs administered by the VA, the DoD, the Coast Guard, and the Public Health Service (PHS); and the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program administered by HHS. Through Section 340B of the Public Health Service Act, Congress has restricted prices for certain drugs used by nonprofit hospitals and federally funded health centers. In recent years, Congress has also imposed some modest regulation of prescription drug prices in Part D.

### *1. Medicaid*

In response to rising drug prices and projected increased Medicaid spending, under the Medicaid Prescription Drug Rebate Program (MDRP), created in 1990 by the Omnibus Reconciliation Act,<sup>32</sup> a drug company that chooses to participate in the Medicaid program must enter into a rebate agreement with HHS providing that it will rebate a specified portion of the Medicaid payment for the drug to the States, which affects the share of Medicaid costs paid by the federal government. 42 U.S.C.

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<sup>32</sup> Rachel Dolan, *Understanding the Medicaid Prescription Drug Rebate Program* 1 n.1, Kaiser Fam. Found. (Nov. 12, 2019), <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/understanding-the-medicaid-prescription-drug-rebate-program/>.

§ 1396r-8. In exchange, Medicaid will cover nearly all the manufacturer's FDA-approved drugs. *Id.* Though the pharmacy benefit is optional, all States cover prescription drugs,<sup>33</sup> and approximately 780 drug manufacturers participate in the MDRP.<sup>34</sup>

For brand-name drugs, the rebate is 23.1% of Average Manufacturer Price (AMP) or the difference between AMP and “best price,” whichever is greater. 42 U.S.C. § 1396r-8(c). Best price is defined as the lowest available price to any wholesaler, retailer, or provider, excluding certain government programs, such as the health program for veterans. *Id.* § 1396r-8(c)(1)(C)(i). AMP is defined as the average price paid to drug manufacturers by wholesalers and retail pharmacies. *Id.* § 1396r-8(k)(1)(A).<sup>35</sup> For generic drugs, the rebate amount is 13% of AMP, and there is no “best price” provision. There is also an inflationary penalty if the drug's price rises faster than the rate of inflation. *Id.* § 1396r-8(c)(2).

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<sup>33</sup> *Prescription Drugs*, CMS, <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/prescription-drugs/index.html#:~:text=Although%20pharmacy%20coverage%20is%20an,withi n%20their%20state%20Medicaid%20programs>.

<sup>34</sup> *See Medicaid Drug Rebate Program*, CMS, <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/prescription-drugs/medicaid-drug-rebate-program/index.html#:~:text=Approximately%20780%20drug%20manufacturers%20currently,of%20the%20Social%20Security%20Act>.

<sup>35</sup> This price includes discounts provided to retail pharmacies but does not include service fees or rebates or discounts to other purchasers (like managed care organizations and pharmacy benefit managers). *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1396r-8(k)(1)(B).

## 2. *Direct Federal Purchasers*

The Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) establishes prices available to all direct federal purchasers, including the VA, DoD, PHS, and the Coast Guard. 38 U.S.C. § 8126(a)–(b). The FSS is intended to allow direct federal purchasers to buy brand-name drugs at prices equal to or below the lowest prices negotiated between manufacturers and their most-favored commercial customers, defined as the customers that receive the best discount or price agreement.<sup>36</sup> If a drug company fails to comply with this provision, it may not receive payments from Medicaid, DoD, PHS, the Coast Guard, or any entity that receives funding under the Public Health Service Act. 38 U.S.C. § 8126(a).

## 3. *VA, DoD, PHS, and the Coast Guard*

The 1992 Veterans Health Care Act created an additional mechanism for lowering drug prices for the four largest federal purchasers: the VA, DoD, PHS, and the Coast Guard (collectively referred to as the “Big Four”).<sup>37</sup> 38 U.S.C. § 8126(b). The federal ceiling price (FCP) established by the 1992 Act is 76% of the non-FAMP

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<sup>36</sup> See *A Comparison of Brand-Name Drug Prices Among Selected Federal Programs* 10–13, Cong. Budget Off. (Feb. 2021), <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/57007>.

<sup>37</sup> The prices available to the Big Four for brand-name drugs are the lower of the FFS price and the cap set by this law. See *Prices for Brand Name Drugs Under Selected Federal Programs* 8, Cong. Budget Off. (June 2005), <https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/109th-congress-2005-2006/reports/06-16-prescriptdrug.pdf>.



or the average sales price to purchasers outside the federal government, with an adjustment if the non-FAMP grew more quickly than the rate of inflation during the previous one-year period.<sup>38</sup>

The combination of the FSS, this discount, and the fact that the VA is a single, integrated health system with a unified list of covered drugs strengthens the VA's bargaining position to negotiate drug prices. As a result, the VA is generally receiving the lowest drug prices of any federal program—paying around 55% of the average net price paid by Medicare Part D.<sup>39</sup>

#### 4. *Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program*

In 1993, as part of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, Congress created the VFC Program to expand access to childhood vaccines by providing free vaccines to eligible children.<sup>40</sup> Children are eligible for participation in the VFC Program if they are eligible for Medicaid, uninsured, underinsured, or are American Indian or

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<sup>38</sup> *Id.*

<sup>39</sup> *A Comparison of Brand-Name Drug Prices Among Selected Federal Programs*, *supra* note 36).

<sup>40</sup> *Vital Signs: Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program: 30 years of protecting children*, Ctrs. for Disease Control & Prevention (updated Aug. 29, 2024), <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/vaccines-for-children/index.html>.

Native Alaskan.<sup>41</sup> The VFC Program authorizes HHS to negotiate the price of vaccines and purchase doses directly from manufacturers at discounted prices.<sup>42</sup>

### 5. 340B

In 1992, also as part of the Veterans Health Care Act, Congress created the 340B Program under Section 340B of the Public Health Service Act to provide certain nonprofit hospitals and federally funded clinics servicing low-income patients (under the statute, “covered entities”) with outpatient drug discounts comparable to those available to state Medicaid agencies. As a condition of having their outpatient drugs covered through Medicaid and Medicare Part B, drug manufacturers are required to offer 340B hospitals and clinics outpatient drugs at or below a discount of 23.1% for brand drugs and 13% for generic drugs. 42 U.S.C. § 256b(a)(1).

### 6. Medicare

Through the ACA in 2010, Congress also created mandatory discounts for brand-name drugs in certain circumstances under Part D where beneficiaries are responsible for paying a portion of their drug’s cost. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1395w-114a.

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<sup>41</sup> *Vaccines for Children Program (VFC): About VFC*, Ctrs. for Disease Control & Prevention (last reviewed Aug. 18, 2023), <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/about/index.html>.

<sup>42</sup> *See Vaccines for Children Program (VFC): VFC Childhood Vaccine Supply Policy*, *supra* note 41.

In 2025 a provision of the IRA not challenged by AstraZeneca in this litigation will replace this requirement with a mandatory discount of 20% that will apply after a beneficiary hits the annual out-of-pocket \$2,000 threshold, per a provision of the IRA not challenged by AstraZeneca in this litigation. *See id.* § 1395w-114c(g)(4)(A)(ii).

**C. AstraZeneca’s Voluntary Participation in the Medicare Program Does Not Create a Property Interest Under the Fifth Amendment.**

As the Government has explained, *see* Appellees’ Br. at 47–56, AstraZeneca’s Due Process Clause argument has no support in existing case law. Three district courts have rejected analogous claims in challenges to the DPNP. *Novo Nordisk Inc. v. Becerra*, Civ. No. 23-cv-20814-ZNQ-JBD, 2024 WL 3594413 (D.N.J. July 31, 2024), *appeal docketed*, No. 24-2510 (3d Cir. Aug. 19, 2024); *Dayton Area Chamber of Com. v. Becerra*, 696 F. Supp. 3d. 440 (S.D. Ohio 2023) (*Chamber*); *Boehringer Ingelheim Pharms., Inc. v. U.S. Dep’t of Health & Hum. Servs.*, No. 3:23-cv-01103(MPS), 2024 WL 3292657 (D. Conn. July 3, 2024), *appeal docketed*, No. 24-2092 (2d Cir. Aug. 8, 2024). Consistent with the decisions of numerous other courts, the *Chamber* court held that “participation in Medicare, no matter how vital it may be to a business model, is a completely voluntary choice,” and does not create a property interest under the Due Process Clause. *Id.* at 456.

Significantly, in challenges brought against federal healthcare programs under the Fifth Amendment’s Takings Clause, courts have consistently held that

participation in Medicare is voluntary. *Baker Cnty. Med. Servs., Inc. v. U.S. Atty. Gen.*, 763 F.3d 1274, 1276 (11th Cir. 2014), *cert. denied*, 575 U.S. 1008 (2015); *Garelick v. Sullivan*, 987 F.2d 913, 916 (2d Cir. 1993), *cert. denied*, 510 U.S. 821 (1993); *Burditt v. U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs.*, 934 F.2d 1362, 1376 (5th Cir. 1991); *Whitney v. Heckler*, 780 F.2d 963 (11th Cir. 1986), *cert. denied*, 479 U.S. 813 (1986); *Minn. Ass’n of Health Care Facilities, Inc. v. Minn. Dep’t of Pub. Welfare*, 742 F.2d 442, 446 (8th Cir. 1984), *cert. denied*, 469 U.S. 1215 (1985); *St. Francis Hosp. Ctr. v. Heckler*, 714 F.2d 872, 875 (7th Cir. 1983), *cert. denied*, 465 U.S. 1022 (1984). Because “[t]he Constitution does not guarantee the unrestricted privilege to engage in a business or to conduct it as one pleases,” the court in *Chamber* declined the plaintiffs’ comparison between the DPNP and the imposition of conditions on public utility companies, which are required to serve the public. *See Chamber*, 2023 WL 6378423, at \*11 (internal citations omitted). Instead, the court found that, “[a]s there is no constitutional right (or requirement) to engage in business with the government, the consequences of that participation cannot be considered a constitutional violation.” *Id.* (citing *Livingston Care Ctr., Inc. v. United States*, 934 F.2d 719, 720 (6th Cir. 1991)).

AstraZeneca voluntarily participates in Medicare, so the consequences of its participation cannot be the basis for finding a constitutional violation. According to the courts that have evaluated this issue, it does not matter if a significant portion of

AstraZeneca’s business is selling drugs to Medicare because it does so voluntarily. AstraZeneca’s voluntary participation in the Medicare program is not a basis for a valid constitutional claim, even if its withdrawal from Medicare would cause significant financial loss.

**D. Where Congress Has Barred Judicial Review of Agency Action, Courts Have Evaluated Only Whether the Challenged Action Falls Within the Scope of the Preclusion Provision.**

AstraZeneca is also incorrect in suggesting that the DPNP’s provision precluding judicial review somehow infringes on its due process rights. *See* Appellants’ Opening Br. at 24, 47, 55, Doc. 69 (July 15, 2024). As in other parts of the Medicare program, the DPNP establishes standards for CMS action while requiring the agency to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including the pharmaceutical industry, to inform agency decision-making. As the Government described in its Opening Brief, *see* Appellees’ Br. at 42, the Supreme Court has repeatedly held that Congress has sole authority to determine the subject-matter jurisdiction of the lower federal courts. Further, where Congress bars judicial review of an agency action, the courts’ only role is to determine “whether the challenged action falls ‘within the preclusive scope’ of the statute.” *Id.* (quoting *DCH Reg’l Med. Ctr. v. Azar*, 925 F.3d 503, 505–06 (D.C. Cir. 2019)).

In enacting the DPNP, Congress followed its common practice of precluding administrative and judicial review of many administrative decisions made in

implementing the Medicare program, and the phrase “no administrative or judicial review” appears more than 60 times in the Medicare statute. 21 U.S.C. § 1395. Administrative and judicial review prohibition appears ten times each in 42 U.S.C. § 1395w-4, Medicare’s physician payment provision, and in 42 U.S.C. § 1395ww, a provision related to payments to hospitals for inpatient services. A half century ago, Medicare’s first prospective payment system precluded judicial review, *see* Pub. L. 98-21, 96 Stat. 144, 601, and a judicial review prohibition has been added to new payment programs since. When agency actions within the scope of these provisions have been challenged, the courts have consistently upheld Congress’s decision to preclude judicial review. *See Yale New Haven Hosp. v. Becerra*, 56 F.4th 9 (2d Cir. 2022); *DCH Reg’l Med. Ctr. v. Azar*, 925 F.3d 503 (D.C. Cir. 2019); *Knapp Med. Ctr. v. Hargan*, 875 F.3d 1125 (D.C. Cir 2017); *Paladin Cmty. Mental Health Ctr. v. Sebelius*, 684 F.3d 527 (5th Cir 2012).

In applying preclusion provisions, the courts recognize that tremendously complex Medicare payment programs cannot function if they are continually burdened by litigation at every step of implementation. Similarly, here the need to implement drug price negotiation in a timely fashion, focusing on drugs where the highest cost savings are possible, justifies preclusion of judicial review.

## **CONCLUSION**

For the foregoing reasons and those set forth in Appellees' Opening Brief, this Court should affirm the decision below.

Date: September 19, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

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**CERTIFICATE OF BAR MEMBERSHIP**

Pursuant to Local Appellate Rule 28.3(d), I hereby certify that I am a member in good standing of the Bar of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.

Date: September 19, 2024

/s/ William B. Schultz  
William B. Schultz



**CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE**

The foregoing brief is in 14-point Times New Roman proportional font and contains 5,059 words, and thus complies with the type-volume limitation set forth in Rules 29(a)(5) and 32(a)(7)(B) of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure.

I further certify that the text of this electronic brief is identical to the text of paper copies of this brief that will be filed with the Court, and that a virus detection program (CylancePROTECT Agent version 1340) has been run on this file and no virus was detected.

Date: September 19, 2024

/s/ William B. Schultz  
William B. Schultz

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on September 19, 2024, I served the foregoing brief upon all counsel of record by filing a copy of the document with the Clerk through the Court's electronic docketing system.

Date: September 19, 2024

/s/ William B. Schultz  
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