

Statement for the Record

United States House Committee on Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee

Legislative Proposals to Support Patient Access to Medicare Services

Thursday, January 8, 2026

Dear Chairman Griffith, Ranking Member DeGette, and Members of the Committee:

The American Lung Association is pleased to submit this statement on the Supplemental Oxygen Access Reform (SOAR) Act (HR 2902) and the Senior Savings Protection Act (HR 6210).

The SOAR Act, introduced by Representatives David Valadao (R-CA), Gabe Evans (R-CO), Adrian Smith (R-NE) and Julia Brownley (D-CA), will improve access to supplemental oxygen for Medicare beneficiaries. More than 1.5 million people living with chronic lung and heart diseases in the U.S. rely on supplemental oxygen, yet many face persistent barriers to accessing the oxygen equipment and services prescribed by their clinicians.

Since 2011, supplemental oxygen has been part of Medicare's DMEPOS Competitive Bidding Program, leading to significant payment reductions for oxygen equipment and supplies. This has created serious challenges for patient access and affordability - limiting the availability of appropriate oxygen modalities and essential support services like respiratory therapists – leaving many patients unable to obtain the correct type and level of oxygen that meets their medical needs and supports an independent and active life.

For many people, these barriers have tangible, everyday consequences. Patients report missing family events, struggling to attend medical appointments, and being unable to exercise, work or leave their homes safely because they cannot access portable or high-flow oxygen systems. People who require higher oxygen flow rates often cannot rely on small portable oxygen concentrators and must instead use large, heavy tanks that restrict mobility and independence. Liquid oxygen – which can provide continuous, high-flow oxygen in a more portable form – is often unavailable due to inadequate reimbursement, effectively confining people to their homes and increasing the risk of social isolation, declining health and avoidable hospitalizations.

The SOAR Act would address these affordability and accessibility challenges by creating a more patient-centric supplemental oxygen benefit, moving away from “home” oxygen to “supplemental oxygen.” This legislation would remove all oxygen services and equipment from the competitive bidding reimbursement system and create a new reimbursement system so that people can access the appropriate modality of oxygen. Additionally, the SOAR Act would ensure patients have access to respiratory therapist services through their oxygen supplier. It would also establish national standardized documentation requirements that rely upon a template rather than prescriber medical records to support claims for supplemental oxygen suppliers to ensure predictable and adequate reimbursement and to protect against fraud and abuse.

The SOAR Act will address challenges that low-income, rural and medically underserved individuals are experiencing. Supplemental oxygen is a lifeline for so many people – decreasing mortality, reducing shortness of breath and increasing exercise capacity. No one should struggle to access the oxygen modality that works best for their medical needs and lifestyle, and no one should suffer the pain and fear of struggling to breathe.

In addition to supporting the SOAR Act, the American Lung Association is also supportive of the Senior Savings Protection Act, bipartisan legislation introduced by Representatives Doris Matsui (D-CA), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Suzan DelBene (D-WA), Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY) and Angie Craig (D-MN). The need for Medicare outreach and enrollment assistance is significant and growing. Millions of older adults already struggle to meet basic living expenses, and thousands more become Medicare-eligible each day while managing chronic conditions that require ongoing care, like chronic lung disease.

The Senior Savings Protection Act would reauthorize funding for Medicare outreach and enrollment assistance for low-income older adults and people with disabilities. Enrollment assistance funded through this program helps people understand their options and access programs that make Medicare more affordable, particularly for those living below or near the federal poverty level. This assistance has been successful in ensuring Medicare beneficiaries can access the support they're eligible for which helps them stay healthy, avoid expensive hospital stays and find stability.

The Lung Association urges Congress to advance both the SOAR Act and the Senior Savings Protection Act to ensure Medicare beneficiaries can access the care they need.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harold Wimmer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Harold P. Wimmer
President and CEO