**June 17, 2022**

**To:        Ms. Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, MPP**

**Administrator**

**Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services**

**Department of Health and Human Services**

**Baltimore, MD**

***RE:        RIN 0938-AU84***

**Dear Ms. Brooks-LaSure,**

**The public has the right to know the truth about preventable complications that result in needless suffering and lost lives from hospital safety errors, negligence, and irresponsible or poorly-skilled providers.**

**It is beyond expression via one letter to communicate how threatening your proposal to suppress calculation and publication of the CMS Patient Safety and Adverse Events Composite (CMS PSI 90) for FY 2023 is to the public trust and indeed our lives.  Especially now after the failures and repercussions exposed during the COVID-19 crisis, additional efforts are needed to collect more data and promote its availability and distribution to the public.**

**In a previous position as a hospital public relations specialist, I witnessed the hospital’s default to silence and secrecy when incidents of incompetent harm to patients occurred.  And with deep grief to this day, I witnessed the death of my mother from such hospital errors, my family’s despair and confusion too disabling to pursue answers and break through the barrier known as, “The white line of silence.”**

**I suffered my own pain and life-long repercussions from preventable infections following two surgeries, one near risk of dying.  Not one of these events was addressed by accountable hospital staff, and as far as I know, none were documented or reported.**

**In passing this proposal, Medicare will be complicit in supporting the use of cover-up and secrecy by our already powerful, self-protecting medical institutions at the risk of patient lives.  You will be invalidating the rights of all Americans to find best care.**

**Before learning of this proposal, I had been pleased with my Medicare but now see it may be an adversary to quality of care and thus my wellbeing.  And a betrayal of all who saved for, pay premiums for, and depend on Medicare to have our backs on patient safety by helping us discern responsible hospitals and providers who perform safe surgical procedures and other quality medical care, from those who threaten our wellbeing with carelessness, or lack of training, skill and due concern.**

**Are the incompetent those you want to protect? Those who don’t want Americans seeking care to have access to their record of possible negligence, sometimes deadly mistakes?  Those who will not work together toward preventing painful suffering and loss by participating in efforts to acknowledge and improve their safety record?  Those providers who *get angry*with concerned, responsible patients using this data while seeking their care, then refuse to provide services, detesting such data is made available to the public?**

**Medicare needs to make sure patients—not incompetent providers--have the information they need to take care of themselves.  CMS is the only source of this data.  It is not available to the public from any other source.  Failing to report these dangers to the American public is an abdication of the profound responsibility entrusted to our policymakers:  to make sure patients know about risks to their lives when making health-care decisions.**

**Recently Federal officials warned the American public about the significant spike in rates of harm.  Now you propose hiding these known risks from us? We are the ones who will suffer or die.  ABOVE ALL, WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW.**

**I felt great concern and gratitude for our hospitals and medical providers under the tremendous strain and horrors brought about by COVID 19.  COVID showed us it is ever more important that everyone now commits to participating in actions to improve accountability so such chaos does not occur in the future.  Would you trust an organization that will not commit?  I won’t.**

**I too was very unhappy with those who refused to wear masks and/or accept vaccination.  With this grave lack of concern for others, the pandemic went on and on, affecting the lives of so many.  I, crucially in need of “elective” surgery, have now had to wait over three years to be scheduled, when living an independent life is not possible without surgery.  Each day life in a wheelchair becomes more probable.**

**Transparency is more important now! Policymakers have warned the public that dangerous complications increased during the pandemic. Patients have the right to data revealing our best options for safe care. Which hospitals and care centers performed best in protecting patients despite COVID-19 surges? Which tragically failed us with negligent, horrific death rates?**

**On moral grounds of responsibility to those seeking care, CMS must withdraw its proposal to suppress the calculation and publication of PSI 90 data and instead, actively promote its distribution to organizations and agencies that will make it readily available to all providers and the public.  In my experiences, most providers and hospital workers themselves are not even aware of this data, their hospital’s dangerous issues, and its safety assessment records/ratings.**

**As a retiree dependent on Medicare for my healthcare coverage, I expected it to have the utmost concern about the quality of care I receive from providers it contracts with for me.  In the long run, such attention and actions toward accountability would save Medicare time and money, and maybe even my life.**

**WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW.**

**I am grateful for the opportunity to personally comment on this crucial issue.**