March 13th, 2023

The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman  
Chair, Senate Health Committee  
1021 O Street, Room 3310  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 90 (Wiener) Insulin Affordability Act – Support

Dear Chair Eggman,

The California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA), one of the state’s foremost grassroots senior and disability advocacy organizations, representing over 1 million Californians, is proud to support SB 90 (Wiener), which prohibits health insurers and health maintenance organizations (HMOs) from imposing a deductible on insulin and caps copayments at $35 for a 30-day supply of insulin.

As a senior and disability advocacy organization, many of our members and their families depend on insulin. Around 4 million adults in California are living with diabetes and approximately 263,000 more Californians are diagnosed with type 1 diabetes each year. This population relies on daily doses of insulin for survival. Without access to insulin, patients are at risk for other serious health complications such as cardiovascular disease, blindness, kidney disease and death. Today in California, there are seniors on fixed incomes and other Californians who because of their incomes would have to choose between food for their families or insulin.

According to the American Diabetes Association, people with diabetes account for a staggering 40 percent of those who have died from COVID-19. The link between COVID-19 and diabetes is becoming clearer, as those with this chronic health condition are at a significantly higher risk of death after contracting COVID-19. Now more than ever it is critical that affordable insulin access is provided to those living with diabetes.

List prices of insulin have risen precipitously in recent years. Between 2002 and 2013, the average price of insulin nearly tripled. Due to these high costs, one in four patients have reported insulin underuse. National law under the Inflation Reduction Act creates a $35 monthly cap on insulin, yet this legislation is limited to seniors and Medicare enrollees. SB 90 will extend this protection to patients with commercial insurance, preventing Californians from having to pay thousands of dollars on their deductible before being able to access their $35 copay for insulin.

Affording Seniors viable resources to age with grace, dignity and independence - such as enhancing health equity - not only represent CARA’s foundational principles but we believe will ensure a healthier, more accessible and inclusive California for our aging community.

CARA/ 1675 7th St. PO Box 23754/ Oakland, CA 94623/ 510-662-4086/ www.californiaalliance.org
For these reasons, CARA strongly supports SB 90 by Senator Wiener, as it will protect patient health and safety by ensuring affordable access to insulin for those who depend on it for survival. This bill is a critical step forward towards making insulin affordable for all.

Please vote YES on SB 90.

Sincerely,

Hene Kelly  
Chair, Legislative Committee

Keith Umemoto  
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee

California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)