



Wednesday, May 17, 2023

The Honorable Steven Horsford  
Chairman  
Congressional Black Caucus

Dear Congressman Horsford,

Thank you and all Members of the Congressional Black Caucus for your leadership on issues of importance to Black America, specifically regarding access to quality healthcare. Driven by our dedication to secure quality healthcare for the communities we serve, the Healthcare Equality Network (HEN) is committed to tackling health disparities head-on. That is why we are writing to you about the latest egregious action an insurance Giant has taken against our nation's most vulnerable patients. *Recently, UnitedHealthcare announced a new barrier to care by placing colonoscopies behind prior authorization.* This policy is not only unreasonable but will put millions of American patients at higher risk for complications and disease, including cancer, and we are encouraging Congress to review this policy.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), colorectal cancer is the fourth leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States. And in May 2021, the [U.S. Preventive Services Task Force](#) lowered their recommendation for colorectal cancer screenings from age 50 to 45. Just this year, the [American Cancer Society](#) projects 52,550 deaths from colorectal cancer alone. Thankfully, the death rate for colorectal cancer has decreased in the last several decades due to increased screenings and early preventative measures.

**As the [largest health insurance company in the country](#), UnitedHealthcare's new policy will devastate lifesaving progress and will inevitably cause more disease, especially in our most vulnerable communities.**

Black Americans are [20 percent more likely to be diagnosed](#) with colorectal cancer and are [40 percent more likely to die](#) from colorectal cancer than any other group. This new policy will directly affect the health of our Black American communities.

**This policy will not only create catastrophic financial scenarios for many patients, while creating endless burdensome paperwork and numerous scheduled additional doctors' appointments, consuming more time, which serves as a disincentive to patients seeking preventative services, which could be fatal.**

We are raising this issue to ensure that UnitedHealthcare policy does not place profits over people at the expense of America's most vulnerable patients. Big Insurance has historically created disparities within underserved communities. We look forward to the Biden administration and Congress, especially the Congressional Black Congress, reviewing this matter more closely.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

The Healthcare Equality Network

Black Women's Health Imperative

The Frederick Douglass Foundation

Former Congressman Ed Town

SCL Global Policy Initiative

Dr. Benjamin Chavis

CC: *Congressional Black Caucus*  
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