



**Dr. James D. Grant**

Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan  
600 E. Lafayette Blvd.  
Detroit, MI 48226

Dear Dr. Grant,

As a practicing physician deeply committed to patient care and an advocate for the integral role of respiratory therapists in healthcare delivery, I am writing to express significant concerns about Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan's policy changes regarding billing for respiratory therapy services.

I serve as a physician who collaborates closely with respiratory therapists daily and also have the privilege of serving as Chair of the American Association for Respiratory Care's (AARC) Board of Medical Advisors. I have witnessed firsthand the expertise respiratory therapists bring to complex procedures and their critical contributions to patient outcomes in hospitals, outpatient clinics, and home healthcare settings.

The recent changes to reimbursement policies, particularly the recommendation to no longer bill for certain respiratory therapy services, pose a serious risk to the quality of care provided to patients. Without adequate reimbursement, hospitals may be forced to reduce respiratory therapy staffing, which will directly and adversely affect patients requiring specialized respiratory and related care.

Respiratory therapists are highly trained professionals who possess unique expertise in ventilator management, pulmonary rehabilitation, airway clearance therapies, and non-invasive ventilation—procedures that are essential to the management of critically ill patients, particularly those with chronic respiratory diseases, such as COPD, asthma, and pulmonary fibrosis. Their role has been further underscored during the COVID-19 pandemic, where their interventions were often the deciding factor in patient survival.

The decision to discourage billing for these critical services disregards the value respiratory therapists bring to patient care and creates a financial disincentive for hospitals to maintain the necessary staffing levels. This policy change risks compromising the care of patients who rely on these services, particularly in underserved areas where respiratory therapy resources are already limited.

I urge Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan to reconsider this policy and assess its impact on patient care. Ensuring appropriate reimbursement for respiratory therapy services is essential for maintaining access to high-quality care and upholding the health outcomes your members deserve.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you would like to discuss this matter further or hear more about the critical role respiratory therapists play in delivering care to your members. Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue.

Sincerely,

**Dr. Ira M. Cheifetz**

Chair, Board of Medical Advisors  
American Association for Respiratory Care

**Cc: Tricia A. Keith**

President and Chief Executive Officer  
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