

November 18, 2009

The Honorable Charles Boustany, MD  
The Honorable Michael Burgess, MD  
The Honorable Donna Christensen, MD  
The Honorable Phil Gingrey, MD  
The Honorable Steve Kagen, MD  
The Honorable Ron Paul, MD  
The Honorable Phil Roe, MD

The Honorable Paul Broun, MD  
The Honorable Bill Cassidy, MD  
The Honorable John Fleming, MD  
The Honorable Parker Griffith, MD  
The Honorable Jim McDermott, MD  
The Honorable Tom Price, MD  
The Honorable Vic Snyder, MD

Dear Representatives:

The undersigned organizations, on behalf of the nation's physicians and the patients they care for, write to request your support for the "Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act" (H.R. 3961). This legislation is essential to preserving access to health care for millions of patients – especially those who rely upon Medicare – and is of the highest importance to our members.

As physicians you are well aware of the problems associated with the current Medicare physician payment policy – especially the sustainable growth rate methodology. Over the past eight years, this failed payment policy has eroded physicians' confidence in, and acceptance of, the Medicare program. As a result, beneficiaries' access to physician services has been compromised. Furthermore, since payment systems such as TriCARE and private health insurance plans base their payment rates upon this flawed Medicare formula, the current payment methodology has had a profound negative impact upon the health care system as a whole.

As you know, Congress has acted annually over this period to prevent deep and devastating cuts in physician payments. While we remain appreciative of these efforts, the means by which those cuts were prevented has created a policy crisis that is on the brink of realization. In 2010, physicians face a 21 percent reduction in their Medicare payments with additional cuts predicted over the next decade.

Continued reliance upon this flawed, unstable, and inequitable payment methodology threatens access to care for millions of patients and creates an environment whereby the overall quality of care is threatened. Meaningful and long-term reform of the physician payment formula will ensure that all patients have access to quality physician services.

Physicians are the foundation of our nation's health care system. As a physician you recognize the impact current payment policies and this projected cut have upon the patient-physician relationship. The United States House of Representatives must take advantage of this historic opportunity to enact comprehensive reforms to the Medicare physician payment system that will ensure all patients have access to quality, comprehensive, physician-directed health care.

Each of you is on record supporting a full repeal of the sustainable growth rate and we hope that you will seize the opportunity to accomplish this goal. To this end, we are asking each of you, as physicians and Members of Congress, to provide leadership on this important issue by supporting H.R. 3961. Together, we can take the necessary steps toward preserving patient access to physician services by permanently repealing this flawed formula. We urge you to vote yes on the "Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act" (H.R. 3961).

American Academy of Dermatology Association  
American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine  
American Academy of Neurology Professional  
American Academy of Ophthalmology  
American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery  
American Association of Neurological Surgeons  
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons  
American College of Cardiology  
American College of Emergency Physicians  
American College of Gastroenterology  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians  
American College of Osteopathic Internists  
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons  
American College of Physicians  
American College of Rheumatology  
American College of Surgeons  
American Geriatrics Society  
American Medical Association  
American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics  
American Osteopathic Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Society for Clinical Pathology  
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy  
American Society for Radiation Oncology  
American Society of Addiction Medicine  
American Society of Anesthesiologists  
American Society of Clinical Oncology  
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery  
American Society of Plastic Surgeons  
American Thoracic Society  
American Urological Association  
College of American Pathologists  
Congress of Neurological Surgeons  
Heart Rhythm Society  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
Medical Group Management Association  
North American Spine Society  
Renal Physicians Association  
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions  
Society of Hospital Medicine  
Society of Thoracic Surgeons