



MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY

Every physician matters, each patient counts.

October 24, 2022

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The Honorable Edward Markey
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Markey,

On behalf of the 25,000+ physicians, residents, and medical students of the Massachusetts Medical Society, I am writing to express our serious concerns regarding the sustainability of Medicare payments to physicians in light of impending payment cuts and changes in the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule. It is necessary for Congress to address these vital payment challenges before the end of 2022 in order to ensure continued access to care for many senior patients.

In the short term, we respectfully request for you to work with your fellow congressional members to address these imminent payment cuts, which will jeopardize patients' access to important health care. From a more long-term perspective, we hope that permanent, bipartisan payment reforms to Medicare can be achieved in a fiscally responsible manner that both maintains this critical payment support for Medicare patients and sustainably compensates physicians for their care of these patients.

Throughout the past couple years, physicians have faced substantial financial hardship due to inflating practice expenses, workforce shortages, necessary investments in physical space and virtual technology to appropriately care for patients, and other impacts of COVID-19. Payment cuts, like those scheduled to take place at the beginning of next year, place physicians in an even more precarious position of financial uncertainty. Accordingly, it is imperative to preserve the payment standards that have kept numerous physician practices and health care facilities afloat during these challenging times.

Specific actions similar to ones that Congress has taken in the past include:

- Providing relief from the scheduled 4.42 percent budget neutrality cut in Medicare physician fee schedule payments.
- Ending the statutory annual payment freeze and providing a Medicare Economic Index update for the coming year.
- Extending the 5 percent Advanced Alternative Payment Model (AAPM) participation incentive and halting the prohibitive revenue threshold increase in order to encourage more physicians to transition from fee-for-service payment models into APMs.
- Waiving the 4 percent PAYGO sequester triggered by passage of the American Rescue Plan Act.

These actions are necessary within the next several weeks in order to prevent potential immediate reduction of staffing levels and office closures, which would significantly jeopardize patients' access to care, especially for those in rural or underserved communities. We look forward to continuing to work with you on longer-term solutions that will support and sustain Medicare's ability to deliver care for patients in need.

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While we appreciate your past interest on this issue, we urge further attention and action before the end of the year. Specifically, we ask that you join your fellow Senators in signing on to the “Dear Colleague” letter, authored by Senators Stabenow (D-MI) and Barrasso (R-WY), which highlights the urgent need for legislative action on this subject. We are happy to work with you in the coming weeks to address these issues that will have a large impact on access to care and stand ready to assist in any way we may be able to help.

Sincerely,

Theodore A. Calianos II, MD, FACS