

March 10, 2011

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
361A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Republican Leader McConnell:

The undersigned organizations urge Congress to begin working in a bipartisan, bicameral manner to enact legislation this year that will eliminate Medicare's sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula and lay the groundwork for adoption of broader physician payment and delivery reforms.

Last year, Congress was required to act five times to pass short-term measures (for as short as one month) to stop Medicare physician payment cuts scheduled for 2010. On three occasions Congress failed to act before cuts were implemented, causing disruptions in processing Medicare payments. These payment uncertainties and delays created serious problems for many physician practices and jeopardized seniors' access to care. Ultimately, Congress and the Administration worked together in a bipartisan manner to develop offsets and pass the "Medicare and Medicaid Extenders Act of 2010," which stabilized Medicare physician payments through 2011. It is our hope that Congress can again work together this year to end the cycle of temporary patches once and for all and develop a long-term and meaningful solution to this issue.

Throughout the past year, Senators and Representatives of both parties, as well as President Obama, have expressed support for permanently addressing the SGR. Both the final report of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform and the President's Fiscal Year 2012 Budget recommended eliminating the SGR. Each year a true solution is postponed, the cost of eliminating the flawed SGR formula grows. As work begins on the Fiscal Year 2012 budget resolution, we believe that this is the year for Congress to make eliminating the SGR one of its highest priorities.

The physician community is committed to taking a leading role in developing and pilot testing payment and delivery reforms that can provide a foundation for replacing the SGR and improving the Medicare physician payment system. We look forward to building upon last year's bipartisan effort to permanently replace the SGR with a workable system that keeps pace with practice costs and ensures that seniors, the disabled, and military families receive the high quality care that they have been promised for years to come.

Sincerely,

AMDA – Dedicated to Long Term Care Medicine
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Emergency Medicine
American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
American Academy of Family Physicians

American Academy of Home Care Physicians
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Ophthalmology
American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy
American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery
American Academy of Pain Medicine
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
American Academy of Sleep Medicine
American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists
American Association of Clinical Urologists
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology
American College of Cardiology
American College of Chest Physicians
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Gastroenterology
American College of Mohs Surgery
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
American College of Osteopathic Internists
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons
American College of Phlebology
American College of Physicians
American College of Radiation Oncology
American College of Radiology
American College of Rheumatology
American College of Surgeons
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Gastroenterological Association
American Geriatrics Society
American Medical Association
American Medical Group Association
American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Society for Clinical Pathology
American Society for Dermatologic Surgery Association
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
American Society for Radiation Oncology
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
American Society of Addiction Medicine
American Society of Anesthesiologists
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons
American Society of Hematology
American Society of Nephrology
American Society of Nuclear Cardiology
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology

American Society of Plastic Surgeons
American Society of Transplant Surgeons
American Thoracic Society
American Urogynecologic Society
American Urological Association
Child Neurology Society
College of American Pathologists
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Heart Rhythm Society
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Joint Council of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology
Medical Group Management Association
North American Spine Society
Renal Physicians Association
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society for Vascular Surgery
Society of Critical Care Medicine
Society of Gynecologic Oncologists
Society of Hospital Medicine
Society of Nuclear Medicine
The Endocrine Society
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

Medical Association of the State of Alabama
Alaska State Medical Association
Arizona Medical Association
Arkansas Medical Society
California Medical Association
Colorado Medical Society
Connecticut State Medical Society
Medical Society of Delaware
Medical Society of the District of Columbia
Florida Medical Association Inc
Medical Association of Georgia
Hawaii Medical Association
Idaho Medical Association
Illinois State Medical Society
Indiana State Medical Association
Iowa Medical Society
Kansas Medical Society
Kentucky Medical Association
Louisiana State Medical Society
Maine Medical Association
MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society
Massachusetts Medical Society
Michigan State Medical Society
Minnesota Medical Association
Mississippi State Medical Association
Missouri State Medical Association
Montana Medical Association

Nebraska Medical Association
Nevada State Medical Association
New Hampshire Medical Society
Medical Society of New Jersey
New Mexico Medical Society
Medical Society of the State of New York
North Carolina Medical Society
North Dakota Medical Association
Ohio State Medical Association
Oklahoma State Medical Association
Oregon Medical Association
Pennsylvania Medical Society
Rhode Island Medical Society
South Carolina Medical Association
South Dakota State Medical Association
Tennessee Medical Association
Texas Medical Association
Utah Medical Association
Vermont Medical Society
Medical Society of Virginia
Washington State Medical Association
West Virginia State Medical Association
Wisconsin Medical Society
Wyoming Medical Society

cc: U.S. Senate