

April 27, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
U.S. Senate

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders Schumer, McConnell, and McCarthy:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing a broad range of physician and non-physician health care providers, thank you for your continued dedication to providing critical pathways for our nation to continue its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our organizations and collective memberships — representing over *one million* health care providers — remain committed to assisting Congress in this process, while simultaneously identifying necessary reforms to the Medicare system designed to enhance patient-centered care, improve outcomes, and ensure continued patient access to health care services.

As Congress and the Administration continue to discuss the parameters of potential legislation to invest in our nation’s infrastructure and related needs, our organizations respectfully request the inclusion of provisions to ensure continued beneficiary access to vital health care services by providing additional financial stability for the nation’s health care system and health care workforce. A critical element of the country’s response to the threats associated with COVID-19 rests with the reliability and resilience of its health care workforce. Frontline health care workers not only learned in real-time how to combat the deadly virus but also collaborated with scientists regarding emerging treatment regimens and the development of critical public health measures. Despite this, the health care delivery system (like most industries) is not emerging from the pandemic unscathed. While the nation has made significant progress, many of the long-term implications of COVID-19 remain unknown. However, and with ongoing research, we are confident that the health care delivery system will continue to evolve to ensure that health care professionals can continue to provide their patients with quality, evidence-based care.

Not surprisingly, the provision of most “normal” or routine health care services was significantly interrupted throughout the public health emergency. This resulted in considerable financial instability for many physician and non-physician health care providers and their practices. In addition, these issues were exacerbated by changes within the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS), which resulted in many providers facing double-digit payment reductions beginning January 1, 2021, not because their services were being overpaid, but as a result of the budget neutrality requirement for payments made under the MPFS. The cuts would have imperiled the access Medicare beneficiaries currently have to a broad range of critical health care services.

Thankfully, in recognition of the potentially devastating impact the cuts would have had on beneficiaries, Congress mitigated these scheduled cuts with the passage of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021* (P.L. 116-260). This bipartisan effort avoided significant disruptions to care for Medicare beneficiaries, reduced the level of cuts in 2021 for many providers, supported small health care businesses — especially in rural and underserved areas — and provided a lifeline for health care providers still reeling from the residual impacts of COVID-19. Unfortunately, this temporary measure did not address the ongoing

structural problems with the MPFS, and the provider community is again bracing for steep cuts in 2022, which could result in many beneficiaries losing access to essential health care services.

We, therefore, urge Congress and the Administration to make a critical investment in the nation’s health care infrastructure by providing an additional \$3 billion for the MPFS to once again mitigate expected reductions to the Medicare conversion factor, ensuring financial stability for physicians and practices in 2022. By maintaining this level of funding — which equates to a 3.75% increase for all payments across the fee schedule — health care providers can continue to focus on addressing patient backlogs and continue to identify effective treatments for patients impacted by “long-haul” COVID-19 symptoms. Our medical practices, therapy clinics, and practitioners must remain viable, so our nation can fully recover from this pandemic and continue to provide high-quality care focused on engaging patients, increasing the delivery of integrated, team-based care, expanding chronic disease management, and reducing hospital admission/readmission rates for beneficiaries residing in the community as well as those in long-term nursing facilities.

Our organizations are considering ways to address long-term challenges associated with Medicare payment policy, especially the budget neutrality provision that has precipitated these steep cuts. We look forward to working with you to ensure that arbitrary reductions unrelated to the cost of care do not create continued problems requiring repeated congressional intervention. Millions of seniors rely on the Medicare program, and we must work to ensure it remains a robust and dependable option for those who need it the most. We remain committed to partnering with Congress to identify and advance these critical reforms and appreciate your continued support of the health care provider community.

If you have any questions or comments related to this request, please contact Cynthia Moran (ACR, cmoran@acr.org), Katie Orrico (AANS, korrigo@neurosurgery.org) or Justin Elliott (APTA, justinelliott@apta.org).

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Alliance for Physical Therapy Quality and Innovation
Alliance for Quality Imaging
Alliance for Recovery Care
American Academy of Audiology
American Academy of Dental Group Practice
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology
American Academy of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
American Association of Hip & Knee Surgeons
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American Chiropractic Association
American Cochlear Implant Alliance
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Gastroenterology
American College of Mohs Surgery
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons

American College of Radiation Oncology
American College of Radiology
American Health Care Association
American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Optometric Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Psychological Association
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
American Society for Radiation Oncology
American Society for Surgery of the Hand
American Society of Anesthesiologists
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Society of Hand Therapists
American Society of Neuroradiology
American Society of Nuclear Cardiology
American Society of Retina Specialists
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
American Urogynecologic Society
American Urological Association
Association of Freestanding Radiation Oncology Centers
Association of Pathology Chairs
CardioVascular Coalition
College of American Pathologists
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Dialysis Vascular Access Coalition
Medical Group Management Association
National Association for the Support of Long Term Care
National Association of Rehabilitation Providers and Agencies
National Association of Spine Specialists
National Center for Assisted Living
Radiology Business Management Association
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions
Society for Vascular Surgery
Society of Gynecologic Oncology
Society of Interventional Radiology
Society of NeuroInterventional Surgery
Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging
The American Society of Breast Surgeons
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons
United Specialists for Patient Access

Cc:

U.S. Senate
U.S. House of Representatives