

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 16, 2024

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Room S-221, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman
Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Chairman Wyden,

We write to request your support to address Medicare payment cuts in upcoming government funding legislation. We stand ready to work with you and offer our assistance in finding a solution that allows physicians to continue the practice of medicine and prevents American seniors from losing access to care. Physicians and members of Congress from both parties support immediate relief from cuts and long-term incentives to support value-based care.

In November 2023, CMS finalized a rule that would decrease Medicare reimbursement for physician services by 3.37 percent, and these harmful cuts took effect January 1, 2024. Bipartisan members of Congress have been active in advancing solutions to address this issue to allow for long term sustainability in the fee schedule while creating short term relief for our nation's physicians. This year, if we as Congress do not act, physicians will continue to face an 8% cumulative cut between the decrease in reimbursement compounded with CMS' own projections of a 4.6% increase in practice cost expenses for 2024.

As members of Congress who are working to increase access to affordable and high-quality health care, it is our goal to advocate for the ever-increasing challenges facing those who provide care for Medicare patients. Doctors are facing unprecedented burnout due to low reimbursement rates, health care consolidation, administrative burdens, and record high inflationary pressures. These existing issues, combined with the sudden, cumulative reduction to Medicare payments over recent years now punctuated by this year's cut will lead to hiring freezes, elimination of services provided to seniors, and decreased patient access to health care services.

Daily, we hear reports from physicians in our home states that are deeply troubling, revealing the continual sacrifices American doctors make to serve Medicare patients nationwide. These low reimbursement rates will only lead to physicians closing their doors either to leave independent practice, which further drives consolidation in the health care marketplace, or leaving medicine all together, which amplifies the existing barriers to care these patients already face. As members who also represent rural and underserved communities, we remain concerned about the impact of Medicare cuts on a worsening health care workforce shortage. As patients postpone necessary interventions, their conditions may worsen, ultimately requiring more extensive and expensive

medical interventions. This cycle not only puts a strain on the health care system but also contributes to poor health outcomes for American patients.

We appreciate that the House and Senate have historically worked together to address payment cuts for providers. Traditionally, there has been bipartisan agreement on the need for long-term sustainability in the physician fee schedule and short-term relief. However, recent bicameral negotiations over government funding legislation have highlighted the lack of attention to our nation's doctors and have demonstrated a process that holds hostage physician and patient well-being for extraneous demands. The decision not to address these cuts this month will lead to major administrative setbacks and interruption to the processing of claims, creating an added challenge for American doctors who are already struggling to keep their doors open.

Bipartisan policies that address physician payment stability in the immediate future will be critical to the continued success of the Medicare program. Short term relief for the conversion factor is vital to keep American physicians afloat by allowing them to operate their practices. Additionally, Alternative Payment Models are necessary to move physicians to value based care. On behalf of America's physicians and Medicare patients alike, we request your commitment to work together on policies to be included in the March 1st government funding legislation. Responsible short-term payment solutions and long-term improvements are both essential in empowering physicians to continue serving our nation's Medicare patients.

Thank you for your consideration.

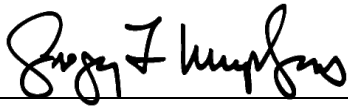
Sincerely,



Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



Gregory F. Murphy, M.D.
Member of Congress



John Joyce, M.D.
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Brian Babin, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



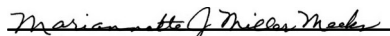
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Diana Harshbarger, Pharm.D.
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Mariannette Miller-Meeks,
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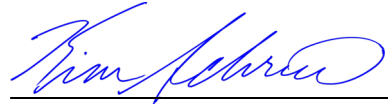
Jefferson Van Drew
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A. Drew Ferguson IV
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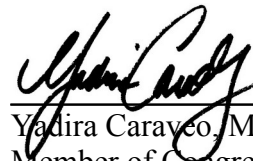
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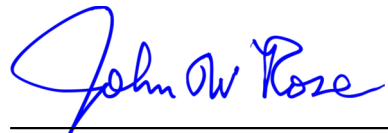
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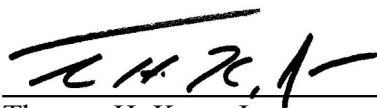
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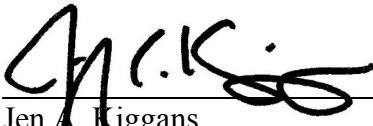
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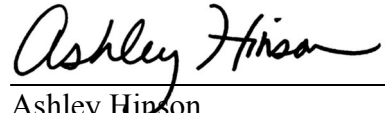
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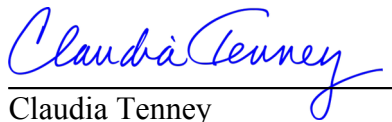
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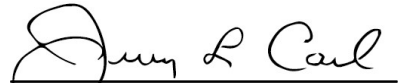
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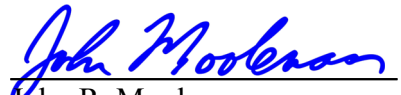
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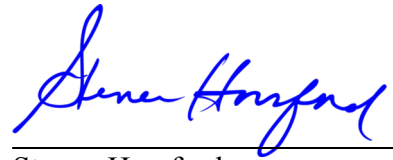
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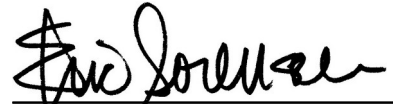
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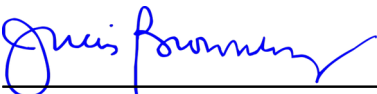
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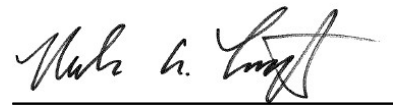
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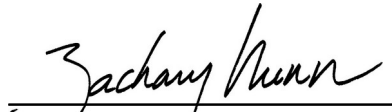
Ron Estes
Member of Congress



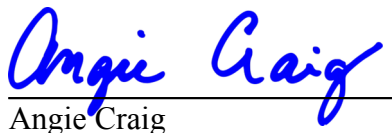
Gus M. Bilirakis
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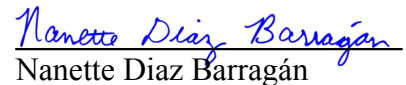

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Susie Lee
Member of Congress


Zach Nunn
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Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress


Angie Craig
Member of Congress


Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

CC:

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mike Johnson, Speaker of the House, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives