

December 09, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senate Majority Leader Schumer, Senate Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and House Minority Leader McCarthy,

On behalf of the millions of Medicare patients across the country, we write to urge you to include the Medicare Providers Act (H.R.8800), which would prevent the harmful cut in the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule from going into effect for at least 12 months, in any year-end legislative package.

[According to an analysis](#) of Medicare Trustees data by the American Medical Association, payments to physicians through Medicare declined by 22% from 2001 to 2021, when adjusted for inflation. This is not sustainable for anyone, much less the medical professionals who patients rely on for everything from cancer care to physical therapy.

Part of the reason the situation has gotten so bad is that physicians are the only type of Medicare providers who do not automatically receive an annual inflationary update. All other providers—including inpatient and outpatient hospitals, nursing centers, and hospices—will see upwards payment adjustments in 2023, just like they do every year. Meanwhile, physicians working with Medicare will see no such adjustments until 2026 due to an ongoing statutory freeze implemented by Congress. And even when that adjustment does kick in, it only represents a 0.25% increase.

At the same time, the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and soaring inflation rates have taken their toll on America's physicians. Many smaller, independent physician practices are struggling to keep their doors open in order to continue providing the same level of care for their patients, particularly physicians that work with the Medicare system, which already reimburses them at much lower rates than other payers like private insurance.

If physicians are forced to endure yet another reduction in Medicare payments, the brunt of the impact will fall squarely on patients who rely on Medicare to cover the treatments and services they need to stay healthy and active. As a result of these new cuts, many physicians may be forced into consolidation or bankruptcy.

Either way, millions of vulnerable patients who already face urgent health care needs, including high rates of chronic health conditions, will end up struggling with reduced access to care, fewer services, and longer wait times. Some physicians may even be forced to refuse low-reimbursement payers like Medicare and Medicaid and scale back their charitable care services, threatening some of our nation's most at-risk patient groups and undermining the health and well-being of entire communities.

While H.R.8800 won't solve everything that's wrong with the Medicare physician payment system, it would at least give some temporary relief to physicians—and in the process, preserve patient access to care—while enabling lawmakers and CMS to come up with a long-term fix. Thank you for considering our perspective and we urge you to swiftly pass this popular, bipartisan legislation to protect seniors' access to needed healthcare services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Derby". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rachel Derby
Executive Director
Patients Rising Now