November 13, 2014

The Honorable John Boehner  The Honorable Harry Reid
Speaker  Majority Leader
United States House of Representatives  United States Senate
Washington, DC  20515  Washington, DC  20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader  Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives  United States Senate
Washington, DC  20515  Washington, DC  20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC  20515

Dear Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Pelosi:

We write to you today urging you to consider and pass bipartisan-bicameral legislation to repeal the flawed Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula, reform payment for physicians and other health professionals, and address the equally important healthcare “extenders,” during the lame duck session of Congress.

As you are well aware, Congress has struggled with the threat that the SGR formula poses to reimbursement for physicians and other health professionals and to access to care for seniors and disabled Americans. Sixteen temporary legislative SGR patches have been enacted since 2003.

Unfortunately, while Congress has long debated and acknowledged the flaws of the SGR formula, these repeated short-term patches leave healthcare providers uncertain about payment rates they will receive year after year. Without both repeal of SGR and broader improvements to reimbursement, Medicare payment policy will continue to disadvantage physicians and health professionals who provide better care at lower costs. The result of this volume centric approach will be ever-increasing costs for consumers, employers and taxpayers. We note that far more federal dollars have been spent through these short-term patches than what would have been spent if long ago the formula had been addressed permanently.

We are encouraged that--for the first time since problems arose from the SGR--Congress has developed comprehensive bipartisan, bicameral legislation, with input from stakeholders, to permanently fix the formula and better reward providers for improvements in patient care.

Congress has a unique opportunity to act during the lame duck session of Congress to pass this vitally important legislation and start the 114th Congress without another looming SGR deadline.
We urge you to work together to enact permanent SGR repeal, payment reform and extenders legislation, and stand ready to work with you to achieve that goal.

Sincerely,

AARP
Allscripts
American Academy of Audiology
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Nursing
American Academy of Ophthalmology
American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery
American Academy of Physician Assistants
American Association of Birth Centers
American Association of Diabetes Educators
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American College of Osteopathic Emergency Physicians
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
American College of Osteopathic Internists
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons
American College of Physicians
American College of Preventive Medicine
American College of Radiology
American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Podiatric Medical Association
American Psychological Association Practice Organization
American Society of Nephrology
Amerinet
AmerisourceBergen
Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired
athenahealth
Bio-Reference Laboratories
CalPERS
Caregiver Action Network
CHE Trinity Health
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Council for Affordable Health Coverage
Direct Primary Care Coalition
Easter Seals
Genetic Alliance
Gross Electric
Healthcare Leadership Council
Healthways
Leading Age
Marshfield Clinic Health System
Medical Group Management Association
MemorialCare Health System
National Association of Chain Drug Stores
National Association of Health Underwriters
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities
National Coalition on Health Care
National Committee on Quality Assurance
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Rural Health Association
Population Health Alliance
Premier healthcare alliance
Society of General Internal Medicine
Spina Bifida Association
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cc:  Dave Camp, Chairman House Ways and Means Committee
     Sander Levin, Ranking Member House Ways and Means Committee
     Fred Upton, Chairman House Energy and Commerce Committee
     Henry Waxman, Ranking Member House Energy and Commerce Committee
     Ron Wyden, Chairman Senate Finance Committee
     Orrin Hatch, Ranking Member Senate Finance Committee