



Sound Policy. Quality Care.

July 6, 2009

Honorable Jim Cooper
1536 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep. Cooper:

As the Alliance of Specialty Medicine, our mission is to advocate for sound federal health care policy that fosters patient access to the highest quality specialty care and improves timely access to high quality medical care for all Americans. As patient and physician advocates, the Alliance welcomes the opportunity to participate in the debate on Medicare and health care reform during the 111th Congress.

We want you to be aware of our opposition to your legislation, H.R. 2718 – the “Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) Reform Act of 2009.” We oppose expanding the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission’s (MedPAC) authority by making it an independent executive branch agency. Like Robert D. Reischauer, former CBO Director and MedPAC Vice Chairman, we find it extremely troubling if MedPAC’s reimbursement and cost reduction recommendations would go into effect unless opposed by a joint resolution of the Congress. We believe that this takes many important Medicare reimbursement rules and decisions outside the purview of Congress and places them in the hands of unelected, and largely unaccountable, “experts.” Given the critical impact that these decisions have on beneficiary access to quality care, we strongly believe that Congress should continue to exert strong oversight over these critical programs and not inappropriately relegate these critical duties to MedPAC.

The Alliance certainly understands and appreciates your growing concern with the rising costs of health care. We fear, however, that such a process and structure is fraught with potential unintended consequences – including restricting Medicare patients’ access to important specialty care procedures and services -- given the current nature and structure of MedPAC. MedPAC has neither the clinical expertise nor the research capacity to examine the national and regional effects of proposed recommendations to ensure patients are not unduly impacted. While MedPAC may be one important group of health policy experts, there are other important experts that must have adequate input into Medicare reimbursement policies.

We therefore strongly oppose your proposal to alter MedPAC’s current advisory status.

Sincerely,

American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American Gastroenterological Association
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Urological Association
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Heart Rhythm Society
National Association of Spine Specialists
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions