

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
NEUROLOGICAL SURGEONS

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October 3, 2017

The Honorable Greg Walden, Chair
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

**SUBJECT: Repeal IPAB, Pass H.R. 849, the Protecting Seniors' Access
to Medicare Act**

Dear Chairman Walden and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS), we urge you to favorably report out the Protecting Seniors' Access to Medicare Act, H.R. 849, without amendment or offsets when the Energy and Commerce Committee takes up the bill at tomorrow's markup. As you know, H.R. 849 would repeal the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB), which is charged with making steep cuts to the Medicare program; thus adversely affecting seniors' ability to see their trusted physicians and get the care they need when they need it.

From the beginning of Medicare, members of Congress have played an essential role in shaping policies that best meet the needs of their communities and constituents to ensure that the health care system is equipped to care for diverse populations across the country. With the advent of the IPAB, however, the people's elected representatives will no longer have power over Medicare payment policy. Instead, these major health policy decisions will rest in the hands of 15 unelected and largely unaccountable individuals. Even worse, if IPAB fails to report recommendations or never becomes operational, this power will rest solely in the hands of a single person — the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. Not only does the creation of IPAB severely limit congressional authority, but it also eliminates the transparency of hearings, debate and a meaningful opportunity for critical stakeholder input. Furthermore, IPAB decisions are not subject to judicial review, granting the board even more unprecedented powers.

While we recognize the need to reduce the federal budget deficit and control the growth of health care spending, the IPAB is simply the wrong solution for addressing these budgetary challenges. With the advent of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA) and other value-based payment programs, physicians are working to improve health care quality and drive down Medicare costs. However, rather than this thoughtful approach to cost containment and quality improvement to enhance the value of the Medicare program, the IPAB is merely a blunt instrument to reduce what Medicare pays for medical treatments and will bring progress on value-based care to a screeching halt.

Leaving Medicare payment decisions in the hands of an unelected, unaccountable body with minimal congressional oversight will negatively affect timely access to quality health care for our country's senior citizens and those with disabilities.

Thank you for considering our request to take action on H.R. 849 to protect Medicare beneficiaries by supporting the repeal of IPAB as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Alex B. Valadka, MD, President
American Association of Neurological Surgeons



Alan M. Scarrow, MD, President
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