



Sound Policy. Quality Care.

December 23, 2019

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Richard Neal
Chairman
House Ways & Means Committee

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Ranking Member
House Ways & Means Committee

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
House Energy & Commerce Committee

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
House Energy & Commerce Committee

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

The Alliance of Specialty Medicine (the “Alliance”) represents more than 100,000 specialty physicians and is dedicated to the development of sound federal health care policy that fosters patient access to the highest quality specialty care. As the year comes to a close, the Alliance writes ***to urge Congress to quickly address the unresolved need to provide positive updates to the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) Conversion Factor.***

As you know, under the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA), beginning in calendar year (CY) 2020, payments under the MPFS are slated to receive 0 percent updates for six years, until 2026. In all likelihood, due to additional statutory provisions that require budget neutrality, the 0 percent updates will translate to *reductions* in the MPFS conversion factor – meaning payments to Medicare physicians will decrease over the six-year period.

Even before the 0 percent updates scheduled for 2020 through 2025, Medicare physician reimbursement has failed to keep up with inflation. At the same time, physicians have been experiencing increasing compliance and reporting burden under the Quality Payment Program (QPP), which encompasses MACRA’s value-based purchasing reforms. Indeed, the Medicare Trustees project that physician costs will continue to increase, on average, by 2.2 percent per year over the long term – well in excess of the payment updates in place for that same period.

We also note that other Medicare providers, including hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, and end-stage renal disease facilities will receive positive payment updates for 2020; in some cases, these are updates of almost 3 percent. This is in stark contrast to the 0 percent update afforded to the physicians who provide and manage the care delivered at these facilities. Yet without physicians and their specialized training and expertise, patients would not be able to take full advantage of the services these facilities provide.

The Alliance believes that Congress must intervene to ensure that physicians receive positive payment updates for 2020 and beyond. While we have been disappointed to see year-end bills passed without this necessary reform, ***we urge Congress to take swift action on this issue in the new year.*** Positive payment updates will help to ensure that the Medicare fee-for-service (FFS) program continues to provide meaningful access to quality specialty care for the nation's aged and disabled population.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We look forward to meeting with you in the coming weeks and months to discuss this important issue to specialty physicians. Should you have any questions, please contact us at info@specialtydocs.org.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Facial Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American College of Mohs Surgery
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons
American Gastroenterological Association
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Society for Dermatologic Surgery Association
American Society of Echocardiography
American Society of Plastic Surgeons
American Society of Retina Specialists
American Urological Association
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
National Association of Spine Specialists
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions