

November 7, 2020

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Chairman
Finance Committee
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Finance Committee
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Neal
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

In 2014, Congress passed the “Protecting Access to Medicare Act” (PAMA), establishing the Appropriate Use Criteria (AUC) Program for advanced diagnostic imaging. Six years later, AUC Program implementation is at a standstill. The undersigned organizations ask Congress to pass before the end of this year a statutory delay of the program, which will allow for a thoughtful and long overdue re-examination of the program.

Physicians led the way with the development of AUC for diagnostic imaging, and they continue to advocate for its use. Although Congress may have believed that the AUC Program was a straightforward approach to encourage the use of AUC by clinicians who order advanced imaging tests, the truth is the law is mired in complexity and has always faced implementation challenges. The result is a now outdated program — particularly with subsequent passage of the Medicare Access and Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (MACRA) and the rise of new health care payment and delivery models, including those that hold clinicians responsible for health care resource use.

Congressional action is now urgently needed to delay the AUC Program so physician practices are not forced to make investments in a program the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services may never be able to implement as PAMA dictates. The last thing physicians need as they struggle through the COVID-19 pandemic is added regulatory and financial uncertainty.

While there may be differing ideas about how the consultation of AUC can be encouraged among clinicians, there is widespread agreement the program cannot be implemented as originally envisioned. For that reason, we ask you to take the decisive step to delay the Medicare AUC Program indefinitely and to engage the entire advanced diagnostic imaging stakeholder community to reach a better, more feasible and less burdensome approach to reward Medicare clinicians who provide high-quality, clinically appropriate care.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Specialty Medicine
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery
American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
American Alliance of Orthopaedic Executives
American Gastroenterological Association
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American College of Gastroenterology
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons
American College of Physicians
American Podiatric Medical Association
American Society for Dermatologic Surgery Association
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Society of Echocardiography
American Society of Nuclear Cardiology
American Society of Plastic Surgeons
American Urological Association
Association of Black Cardiologists
California Medical Association
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
MCG, Part of the Hearst Health Network
Medical Group Management Association
National Association of Spine Specialists
Texas Medical Association