

November 18, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader, U.S. House of  
Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Seniors' Access to Physician Care Increasingly at Risk Unless Congress Stabilizes Medicare Now

---

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries, Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell,

With precious time left in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, we are writing to express our concern that the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) is on a dangerously unsustainable path and to urge Congress to pass reforms that will help bolster seniors' access to timely, quality care.

Doctors are the backbone of our healthcare system. Yet, nationwide, there is a documented shortage of physicians, which is being made worse by inflation, rising labor costs, burdensome administrative tasks like prior authorization and regulatory red tape, and years of successive Medicare cuts.

Since 2001, cumulative cuts to Medicare have resulted in [a steep 29% reduction](#) in payments even after adjusting for inflation, according to the American Medical Association. With the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) proposing another 2.8% reduction to the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) for 2025, the long-term viability of physician practices and the sustainability of our nation's healthcare system is in jeopardy.

Almost daily, new reports highlight how these trends threaten our healthcare system. Patients are being impacted, and this is just the tip of the iceberg.

The TODAY Show [recently documented](#) how the doctor shortage is making it difficult for patients to schedule medical appointments. These challenges will be exacerbated as more doctors retire or leave the field altogether, with not enough joining the workforce to meet demand. In fact, [the Association of American Medical Colleges projects](#) the United States will be short as many 86,000 doctors by 2036.

Moreover, according to a [recently-released Commonwealth Fund report](#), the United States, by a wide margin, has the lowest performing healthcare system of ten wealthy nations. This is driven in part by widespread access challenges (including physician shortages), burdensome and inefficient processes for interacting with payers, persistently poor health outcomes, and low levels of health equity. To improve the healthcare system, the researchers suggest improving compensation for clinicians, among other recommendations.

Meanwhile, [a report from the Center for Medical Economics and Innovation](#) at the Pacific Research Institute found that “artificially low reimbursement rates used by Medicare to contain costs are threatening patient care, and reform is needed to prevent future doctor shortages.” This includes tying the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule to a measure of inflation to ensure Medicare reimbursement to doctors keeps pace with rapidly rising costs.

Lagging Medicare reimbursement has serious consequences. As costs rise and payments decline, more physicians’ offices are deciding to stop accepting new patients or to cut back on services. Worse, we fear that some practices may stop taking Medicare beneficiaries or close altogether. This would have an adverse impact on patients, especially in rural and underserved areas.

As representatives of the nation’s patient community, we call on Congress to pass comprehensive Medicare payment reform that fairly compensates doctors rather than continuing policies that erode the cornerstone of our healthcare system. Recently, lawmakers signed a letter calling for physicians to receive “a payment update that takes into account the cost of actually delivering care to patients.” Now, lawmakers must come together in a bipartisan manner to make this a reality. It’s time for Congress to stabilize the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule so patients across the country can easily access quality care for many years to come.

With the clock running out in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, please keep patients top of mind and help advance legislation that finally sets Medicare on a sustainable path.

Sincerely,

AliveAndKickn  
Association of Mature American Citizens  
Autistic Women & Non-Bienary Network  
Avery’s Hope  
Cactus Cancer  
Center for Medicine in the Public Interest  
Cervivor  
Colon Cancer Coalition  
Connecting Pieces  
Free2Care

Global Campaign for Cancer Survivorship  
Infusion Access Foundation  
International Foundation for AiArthritis  
Looms for Lupus  
National Scleroderma Foundation  
Nevada Chronic Care Collaborative  
One Cancer Place  
Patients Rising  
People with Empathy  
Practicing Physicians of America

Prader-Willi Syndrome Association  
RetireSafe  
Right Scan, Right Time  
Say Yes to Hope  
Stronger Than Sarcoidosis  
Support Fibromyalgia Network  
The Akari Foundation  
The Blue Hat Foundation  
The Patient Helpline Foundation  
The Steffens Scleroderma Foundation