

November 17, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, and Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the Endocrine Society, the world's largest professional organization of endocrinologists, I urge Congress to pass legislation to avert the 8.5% cut to Medicare payments which is scheduled to occur on January 1, 2023. Founded in 1916, the Endocrine Society represents approximately 18,000 physicians and scientists engaged in the treatment and research of endocrine disorders, such as diabetes, hypertension, infertility, obesity, osteoporosis, endocrine tumors and cancers (i.e., thyroid, adrenal, ovarian, pituitary) and thyroid disease. Many of our members treat Medicare beneficiaries with costly, chronic conditions, and averting these cuts will help ensure those beneficiaries continue to have access to high-quality care.

These looming payment reductions are a result of two policies that Congress has the authority to address. As you may know, the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) final rule includes a 4.5% reduction to the conversion factor, with most of the cut stemming from the expiration of the 3% increase Congress authorized for 2022. The second cut is a statutory PAYGO cut of 4% which will apply across all Medicare programs. These cuts come at a time when physicians continue to struggle with the effects of COVID-19 and increasing inflation. Additionally, physician payments have stagnated over the last two decades. According to an American Medical Association analysis of Medicare Trustees data, Medicare physician payment has been reduced by 20% when adjusted for inflation from 2001–2021.¹ The Medicare Physician Fee Schedule does not have a consistent mechanism for updating payments, and the results are clear: payment for Medicare physician services have not kept pace with those delivered outside of the physician office, the consumer price index, or practice costs.

Without action, the combination of these payment cuts deeply threatens Medicare beneficiary access to high-quality care and jeopardizes the sustainability and viability of physician practices. Besides acting now to eliminate the immediate danger of this 8.5% cut, the Endocrine Society urges



Congress to break the annual cycle of threatened Medicare payment reductions and legislative fixes by working with the Endocrine Society and other physician specialties to implement systemic reforms that bring stability to the Medicare physician payment system and ensure beneficiary access to high-quality services.

Revisiting the statutory mechanism for physician payment is particularly important to ensure there is an adequate supply of endocrinologists. Data show that 78.5 percent of counties in the United States have no practicing endocrinologists, forcing patients to travel long distances and endure significant wait times to see an endocrinologist.² The shortage of endocrinologists is only exacerbated by this cycle of threatening cuts, which is particularly acute for our members, as endocrinology is the fourth lowest compensated specialty.³ Like other specialists, endocrinologists enter practice with significant medical school debt, yet their compensation is not keeping pace with that of other specialties or the cost of living.

The Endocrine Society stands ready to work with you to address the flaws in the Medicare payment system. Thank you again for your leadership and for all that you are doing to support patients and providers. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Rob Goldsmith, Director, Advocacy and Policy at rgoldsmith@endocrine.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ursula Kaiser".

Ursula Kaiser, MD
President
Endocrine Society

cc: Chairman Ron Wyden, Senate Finance Committee
Ranking Member Mike Crapo, Senate Finance Committee
Chairman Richard Neal, House Ways & Means Committee
Ranking Member Kevin Brady, House Ways & Means Committee