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Advancing Excellence

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June 18, 2002

The Honorable Bill Thomas
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Thomas:

The College of American Pathologists (CAP), representing nearly 16,000 physician members and the laboratory community, is pleased to support the "Medicare Modernization and Prescription Drug Act Of 2002."

We are particularly pleased that for the next several years this legislation will avert deep, successive cuts in Medicare physician payments. This is essential to protect patient access to care and will allow Congress time to consider a long-term solution that best meets the needs of Medicare beneficiaries and more accurately reflects the cost of their care.

The legislation also avoids costly and burdensome rule changes by continuing for an additional year relief provided under the "Medicare, Medicaid, and S-CHIP Benefits Improvement and Protection Act of 2000" (BIPA) that, under certain conditions, allows independent laboratories to continue billing Medicare directly for the technical component (TC) of physician pathology services. Although the College believes that a permanent remedy is preferable, the bill takes a step toward preserving valuable health care services provided by independent laboratories to hospital patients, especially in small and rural communities. In addition, the College supports the bill's allowance of a Consumer Price Index (CPI) update for the clinical lab fee schedule.

Again, the College is pleased to support your legislation to improve and strengthen the Medicare program for our nation's seniors.

Sincerely,

Paul Raslavicus, MC, FCAP
President