



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS
STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

May 20, 2010

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the nearly 94,700 members of the American Academy of Family Physicians, I urge you to support the *Tax Extenders Act* (HR 4213). The measure contains a provision that will help provide stability to the physician payment formula until 2014. In addition, it would revise the way physicians are paid by Medicare to recognize an increasingly important role for primary care physicians in the delivery of efficient, effective health care.

The legislation takes advantage of the exemption from PAYGO offset requirements for a major portion of the funds needed to pay physicians until 2015. Congress has approved this exemption in recognition of the fact that much of the cost associated with fixing this formula is the result of actions taken by several Congresses as far back as 2003. Failing to address the fundamental problems with the underlying payment formula, Congress has resorted to short-term patches (some as short as a month long) that have created considerable uncertainty among both physicians and beneficiaries about the stability of Medicare. We commend Congressional leaders for recognizing in this bill that these short-term payment patches are not an effective way to pay for the delivery of needed care.

We further appreciate that the payment formula for 2012-2014 uses the model set forth in HR 3961, which differentiates the conversion factor for primary care and preventive health services from the conversion factor for all other medical services. This takes into account the likely growth of primary care as the nation moves to an improved health care delivery system. The data is clear that if patients have a primary care physician with whom they have a continuous relationship for their comprehensive care, they will have better health care, avoiding unnecessary and duplicative tests and procedures, managing the chronic conditions and coordinating access to more specialized care when appropriate.

The legislation builds on the recent efforts of Congress to recognize the value of primary care and provides stability of payment for several years. While we are disappointed that the bill does not provide the permanent payment reform that we and the physician community have been seeking, it takes a step in the right direction. We will continue to work with Congress to find a permanent payment formula that includes the precedent of improved and differential payment for primary care physicians. We support the passage of HR 4213 and ask for you to vote in favor of it.

Sincerely,

Ted Epperly, MD, FAFPP
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