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Dear Representative:

On behalf of millions of AARP's members, we urge you to vote in favor of critically needed legislation to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries do not lose access to their physicians.

Absent Congressional action by June 1st, physicians who treat Medicare patients will receive a 21 percent reduction in their reimbursement. We are concerned that these cuts could have a dramatic impact on beneficiaries' access to physicians – particularly in rural areas. Some of our members have already experienced difficulty in finding a physician who will accept Medicare patients – a problem that can be more common for those newly eligible for Medicare. For nearly a decade, Congress has used short-term patches to prevent imminent cuts to how doctors who treat Medicare patients are paid – an approach that has created a great deal of anxiety among Medicare patients and the health providers who serve them. People on Medicare deserve the peace of mind of knowing they can find a doctor when they need one.

AARP is pleased that this legislation prevents the drastic 21 percent cut and provides a stable payment rate for the physicians who treat Medicare patients. While we recognize this is only a short term solution, our members – and the physicians who treat them – should not continue to be held hostage by short-term band-aid patches to an unworkable Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula. Going forward, we are committed to working with Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle to repeal the SGR, and to establish a permanent physician payment system that rewards value and ends the uncertainty for patients and providers alike.

Sincerely,

Nancy A. LeMond