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Advancing Excellence

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November 20, 2003

The Honorable Bill M. Thomas
2208 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Thomas:

The College of American Pathologists (CAP), representing 16,000 physician pathologists that practice in community hospitals, independent clinical laboratories and academic medical centers is pleased to support the agreement reached in conference on the Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003. This legislation will improve Medicare coverage for seniors and protect access to the physicians and services upon which they rely for quality care.

We are particularly pleased that the conference agreement will avert deep, successive cuts in Medicare physician payments and begin to address the underlying flawed payment formula. This is essential to ensure that physicians can continue to meet the medical needs of Medicare beneficiaries.

The conference agreement also preserves critical health care services provided by independent laboratories to hospital patients, especially in small and rural communities. In addition, regulatory burdens are reduced so that physicians can focus on patients instead of red tape and paperwork.

The CAP remains concerned about freezing clinical laboratory payments at current levels with no inflation adjustment. However, the agreement rightly rejects a 20% beneficiary co-pay for important diagnostic tests that is neither cost-effective nor in the best interest of patient care.

Again, the CAP is pleased to support the conference agreement and we look forward to working with you to secure enactment of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary E. Kass, M.D.".

Mary E. Kass, MD, FCAP
President