



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS  
INTERNAL MEDICINE | *Doctors for Adults*<sup>®</sup>

December 6, 2013

The Honorable Max Baucus  
Chairman  
Senate Finance Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch  
Ranking Member  
Senate Finance Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dave Camp  
Chairman  
House Ways and Means Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sandy M. Levin  
Ranking Member  
House Ways and Means Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leaders of the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I want to express our strong support for the continued progress being made in Congress to develop a bipartisan, bicameral plan to repeal Medicare's Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula and to reform Medicare physician payments. Working together, you have succeeded in developing a legislative framework that would advance the College's top priorities for physician payment reform:

1. It repeals the SGR formula.
2. It creates opportunities for physicians to earn positive baseline updates for participating in a new value-based payment (VBP) program or in an Alternative Payment Model (APM). We are pleased that in response to ACP's comments on the earlier draft, the committees revised the draft to allowing participation in specialty boards' maintenance of certification programs to count toward clinical practice improvement activities.
3. It creates incentives for physicians who practice in Patient-Centered Medical Homes and Patient-Centered Specialty practices: such practices will qualify for the highest possible clinical practice improvement scores under the VBP program, or alternatively, may become eligible for 5 percent annual bonus payments as a designated APM.
4. It makes improvements in the process for developing relative value units, including giving CMS the authority to seek additional data from physicians to validate the accuracy of RVUs (relative value units), and to compensate physicians for providing such data. As recommended by ACP, the new proposal eliminates penalties on physicians who decline to participate in the RVU survey process, and counts changes in RVUs that have been recommended by the RUC (AMA/Specialty Society Relative Value Scale Update Committee) —and accepted by CMS—toward the annual targets for reducing misvalued RVUs. The new proposal also sets lower annual percentage targets for reducing misvalued RVUs, thereby making the targets more achievable and also lowering the amount of money that will be taken out of the physician payment system if the targets are not met.

Also as recommended by ACP, the revised framework:

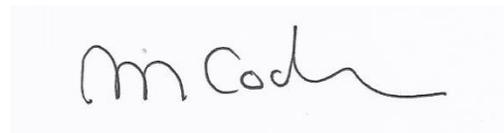
- Increases funding for performance measure development and validation;
- Increases funding for physicians in smaller practices—and expands eligibility to smaller practices that fall outside of health professional shortage areas—to assist them in making the transition to VBP programs and APMs.

The College also is pleased that the legislation will require a GAO study of ways to better harmonize measures used by Medicare and private payers.

**Therefore, the College is urging members of the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee to report legislation based on the current framework before Congress recesses for the holidays, so that it can be voted on, and sent to the President for his signature, as early as possible when Congress returns in January. In the meantime, we believe that it is essential that Congress act to prevent the nearly 25 percent cut to physicians that will occur on January 1 because of the current SGR formula.**

The College also continues to urge Congress to ensure that existing programs that recognize the critical role of primary care in terms of ensuring access, improving quality, and lowering costs are not allowed to sunset, including the Medicaid primary care pay parity program, which sunsets at the end of 2014, and the Medicare primary care bonus program, which sunsets at the end of 2015.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Molly Cooke", is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Molly Cooke, MD, FACP  
President

Cc: Members, House Ways and Means Committee  
Members, Senate Finance Committee