



Rep. Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Rep. Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
H204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Senator John Thune
Senate Majority Leader
511 Dirksen Senator
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

January 16, 2025

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries, Leader Thune, and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), congratulations on the start of the 119th Congress. ACP is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician membership society in the United States. ACP members include 161,000 internal medicine physicians, related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge, clinical expertise, and compassion to the preventive, diagnostic, and therapeutic care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.

ACP supports evidence-based policy solutions to help maintain public health and wellness while also ensuring access to high quality health care when and where a patient needs it. We stand ready to serve as a resource and to support legislation that improves the health and well-being of our nation. Specifically, we ask you to prioritize efforts in several areas:

Finalize Medicare Payment Fix, Telehealth Extension, and Pharmacy Benefit Manager and Prior Authorization Reform

In the near-term, ACP asks that you prioritize completion of the bipartisan package of health care legislation that was released toward the end of the 118th Congress. This package would have stopped a cut to the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (PFS), authorized a two-year extension of telehealth coverage, funded the National Health Service Corps and Teaching Health Centers Graduate Medical Education Program, implemented reforms to prior authorization processes within Medicare Advantage, and established much-needed reforms and transparency requirements for pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs). ACP was disappointed that Congress was unable to adopt this legislation in December and urges you to prioritize its passage at the earliest

date possible this year. Patients and physicians need the access, resources, and stability that this legislation would provide.

Because Congress did not adopt the health care package in December, a 2.8 percent cut to physician Medicare payments went into effect on January 1, 2025. This cut is the result of systemic flaws within the PFS, and this is the fifth straight year that the final PFS rule includes an across-the-board cut to payment rates for physicians and other clinicians. Congress has passed legislation over the past four years to mitigate portions of these cuts, and action is needed to stop the current cut. Failure to do so creates instability for already-strained medical practices that puts patient access to care at risk. This near-term stabilization is an essential step towards longer-term payment reform efforts that House and Senate committees have been working on and are intended to better support patient care, especially for those with multiple chronic conditions.

Under the current Continuing Resolution, telehealth coverage flexibilities that include the removal of geographic restrictions, expansion of originating sites required for telehealth visits, audio-only telehealth access and that allows for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) to continue providing telehealth service have only been extended until March 31, 2025. We urge you to prioritize a long-term extension that ensures patients continue to have access to care through telehealth.

PBMs administer prescription drug coverage for more than 266 million Americans in private and public health plans, making them the principal purchasers of prescription drugs in the United States. An ongoing challenge is the lack of transparency in PBMs, with the contracts negotiated between health plans and PBMs for fees and the share of a rebate that is retained by the PBM are kept confidential. ACP supports policies that would ensure rebates and other savings are used to help lower prescription drug costs for patients. ACP has long supported the “Improving Seniors’ Timely Access to Care Act”, which would protect patients from unnecessary delays in care and reduce administrative burden on physicians by streamlining the prior authorization approval processes in Medicare Advantage. The legislation had bipartisan support in the 118th Congress, with 231 cosponsors in the House and 59 cosponsors in the Senate. ACP strongly supports the Improving Senior’s Timely Access to Care Act being included in any new package of health care legislation.

Protecting Health Insurance Affordability and Medicaid Coverage

As Congress considers new legislation this year, it is important to build on past successes that have improved the affordability of comprehensive health insurance coverage. We ask that you extend, and make permanent, the health insurance premium tax credits for Health Insurance Marketplace coverage. These tax credits make health insurance more affordable for low-income Americans who do not qualify for Medicaid. The health insurance premium tax credits are currently scheduled to expire at the end of 2025. The Congressional Budget Office projects that an estimated 3.4 million Americans will lose their health insurance coverage if these tax credits are not extended.

A Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) [report](#) also estimates that roughly 19 million Americans will face double or triple-digit increases in their premium payments; this includes estimates that premiums will increase by 90 percent in Florida, 115 percent in Texas, 102 percent in North Carolina, and 85 percent in Georgia as residents of those states receive a greater share of premium tax credits than in other states. KFF also found that the tax credits cut consumers' costs by about 44 percent, saving the average enrollee \$700 annually if they remain intact. We ask that you ensure that the health insurance premium tax credits are extended this year.

ACP also strongly supports policies that strengthen Medicaid. It is a vital safety net program, which provides health insurance coverage for more than 85 million Americans and ensures that our most vulnerable populations have access to health care. ACP opposes policies that could result in funding shortfalls, such as a block grant or per-capita cap, which would put coverage for patient care at risk.

Protecting Public Health

We are living in an age of unprecedented scientific and technological advancement in medicine, but unfortunately incidences of previously well-controlled, vaccine-preventable diseases, such as pertussis (whooping cough) and measles, are increasing in the United States. Vaccines are vital to our ability to prevent diseases that threaten public health, including novel diseases and future pandemics. We ask that you renew efforts to utilize the best possible scientific evidence to guide public health legislation. It is critical that public health leaders support evidence-based medicine, including the use of vaccines and other effective public health strategies that protect all of us.

Conclusion

Inclusive of the issues discussed in this letter, ACP has a broad set of [policy priorities](#) that benefit the overall health and well-being of patients, physicians, and the practice of internal medicine. ACP stands ready to work with you to advance these and other policies that strengthen and improve the health and well-being of all Americans and support the physician and health care workforce caring for them. Please reach out to David Pugach, ACP Vice President for Governmental Affairs and Public Policy, at dpugach@acponline.org, should you have any questions or if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Isaac O. Opole, MD, PHD, MACP

President