December 5, 2012

The Honorable John A. Boehner  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC  20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Democratic Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC  20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Representative Pelosi:

As organizations representing the majority of the nation’s physicians, we write to express our strong opposition to proposals that would eliminate the Medicaid primary care payment increase that was recently finalized in a final rule issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and scheduled to be implemented on January 1.

Elimination of this policy further burdens the already challenged Medicaid system of today. Patients will face obstacles to connecting with a patient-centered medical home and will be forced to rely on episodic, acute care services provided in other settings, foregoing the more cost-effective coordinated and preventive care services that primary care physicians provide. Policies aimed at improving access to physicians in the Medicaid program are strongly supported by our organizations because we understand that investments such as these lead to better quality of care for patients and decreased costs for state governments.

The Medicaid payment increase ensures that Medicaid payments for eligible physician services in all states are no less than Medicare, independent of whether a state has chosen to participate in the Medicaid expansion authorized by the Affordable Care Act (ACA). By doing so, it will improve access to care for persons enrolled in both the existing Medicaid program and persons who may become newly eligible for Medicaid in states that accept the federal dollars to expand Medicaid.

Over the past few years, our nation has taken significant steps towards improving access to health care for the uninsured and underinsured. A principal part of this effort has been the investment in primary care as the foundation of our nation’s health care system. Expanding access to physicians, especially primary care physicians, is a priority for federal and state governments, as well as commercial insurance plans. Private and public health care systems are making this investment as a means of improving access to health care for patients and as a means of improving the overall quality and efficiency of care provided.

Our members are dedicated to working individually and collectively to ensure that all patients, including low-income working families who depend on Medicaid, have access to needed primary care services. However, many physicians do not participate in the Medicaid program due to poor payment rates that, historically, are well below the actual costs of providing care. This results in reduced access to care for the most vulnerable patients and higher costs to federal and state governments.

Although a principal goal of this Medicaid policy is to improve access to primary care, the policy also increases payments to many subspecialists in internal medicine and pediatrics, with the purpose of increasing participation and access to their services.

A key to achieving our joint goals of ensuring increased access and improved quality is ensuring that Medicaid and Medicare payment policies are aligned with the access and quality goals established by public and private health care systems. The Medicaid payment increase is an important policy that
attempts to better align payment rates with cost of care for primary care physicians, thus increasing access to primary care physicians for millions of Medicaid patients.

We urge you to oppose elimination of the Medicaid primary care payment increase.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine
AMDA - Long Term Care Medicine
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases
American College of Allergy Asthma and Immunology
American College of Cardiology
American College of Chest Physicians
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
American College of Osteopathic Internists
American College of Osteopathic Pediatricians
American College of Physicians
American College of Rheumatology
American Gastroenterological Association
American Geriatrics Society
American Medical Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Pediatric Society
American Society for Blood and Marrow Transplantation
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Society of Hematology
American Society of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Infectious Disease Society of America
Joint Council of Allergy Asthma and Immunology
MEDNAX National Medical Group
National Physicians Alliance
North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition
Pediatric Orthopaedic Society of North America
Pediatric Medical Group
Renal Physicians Association
Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine
Society for General Internal Medicine
Society for Pediatric Research
Society of Hospital Medicine
The Endocrine Society

Medical Association of the State of Alabama
Alabama Academy of Family Physicians
Alabama Chapter, American College of Physicians
Alabama Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

Alaska State Medical Association
Alaska Chapter, American College of Physicians
Alaska Osteopathic Medical Association

Arizona Medical Association
Arizona Academy of Family Physicians
Arizona Chapter, American College of Physicians
Arizona Osteopathic Medical Association
Arizona Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Arizona Society of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians

Arkansas Medical Society
Arkansas Academy of Family Physicians
Arkansas Chapter, American College of Physicians
Arkansas Osteopathic Medical Association
Arkansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

California Medical Association
California Academy of Family Physicians
California Chapter, American College of Physicians
Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons of California
California Chapter 1, American Academy of Pediatrics
California Chapter 2, American Academy of Pediatrics
California Chapter 3, American Academy of Pediatrics

Colorado Medical Society
Colorado Academy of Family Physicians
Colorado Chapter, American College of Physicians
Colorado Society of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
Colorado Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

Connecticut State Medical Society
Connecticut Academy of Family Physicians
Connecticut Chapter, American College of Physicians
Connecticut Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

Delaware Academy of Family Physicians
Delaware Chapter, American College of Physicians
Delaware State Osteopathic Medical Society
Delaware Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

Medical Society of the District of Columbia
District of Columbia Academy of Family Physicians
District of Columbia Chapter, American College of Physicians
District of Columbia Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

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Florida Medical Association
Florida Academy of Family Physicians
Florida Chapter, American College of Physician
Florida Society of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
Florida Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

Medical Association of Georgia
Georgia Academy of Family Physicians
Georgia Chapter, American College of Physicians
Georgia Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

Hawaii Medical Association
Hawaii Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons

Idaho Medical Association
Idaho Academy of Family Physicians
Idaho Osteopathic Medical Association
Idaho Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

Illinois State Medical Society
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Indiana Academy of Family Physicians
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Iowa Medical Society
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Kansas Medical Society
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Kentucky Medical Association
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Kentucky Chapter, American College of Physicians
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Louisiana State Medical Society
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Wyoming Medical Society
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cc: United States House of Representatives