

March 25, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell:

The undersigned national physician cardiovascular specialty and voluntary health organizations dedicated to the heart and vascular health of all Americans are deeply concerned about America's Medicare patients affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic. The recent deployment of vaccines has provided us with much needed hope that the spread of this dreaded disease will be greatly reduced as a result. We remain alarmed, however, about the stubbornly high COVID-19 rates and the new, highly contagious, variants of the virus. We fear that the strain on the entire health care system will continue well into late 2021. Patients with cardiovascular disease are at acute and elevated risk of morbidity and mortality from COVID-19. Clinicians, as a result, continue to require the resources to treat patients that would be provided through legislation addressing the proposed Medicare sequester cuts.

Because the fiscal demands of the pandemic remain front of mind, we urgently ask that Congress pass bi-partisan legislation to extend the congressionally enacted moratorium on Medicare cuts caused by sequestration through the duration of the public health emergency (PHE). COVID-19 remains a serious threat to our patients and does not diminish the fact that cardiovascular disease remains the number one cause of death in the United States.

We applaud Congress for recognizing early on that the pandemic created severe financial strains on our nation's health care system, including physician practices. Congress responded by providing physicians and other health care providers with a much-needed reprieve from the 2 percent Medicare payment sequester through the remainder of 2020 in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. We thank Congress for also including in the 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act an extension of the sequester moratorium until March 31, 2021. This March 31 deadline, however, is swiftly approaching. We are critically concerned that without further action by Congress, the pending Medicare reductions will further damage physician practices and other health care providers.

We look forward to working with Congress to address the additional 4% Medicare cut, approximately \$36B, scheduled to take effect as a result of the PAYGO Act rules that require the cost of the American Recovery Act to be offset or automatically trigger an across the board cut to Medicare at the end of the year.

It is critical for Congress to take immediate steps to further extend relief and pause these Medicare cuts. Our heroic caregivers remain on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now is not the time to take away the necessary resources required to care for patients and their communities. Physicians and other health care providers are playing a leading role in the ongoing vaccination efforts. We look forward to working with the US Senate to achieve necessary relief from the pending Medicare cuts.

Sincerely,

Association of Black Cardiologists

American College of Cardiology

American Society of Nuclear Cardiology

American Society of Echocardiology

American Vein & Lymphatic Society

CardioVascular Coalition

Dialysis Vascular Access Coalition

Heart Failure Society of America

Mended Hearts, Inc.

Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions

Society for Cardiovascular Computed Tomography

Society for Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance