

March 16, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

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

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, and Leader McCarthy:

The undersigned national physician specialty and voluntary health organizations dedicated to the heart and vascular health of all Americans remain concerned about the nation's Medicare patients affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic. While we are hopeful the recent deployment of vaccines will reduce the spread of this terrible disease, we remain deeply troubled that the stubbornly high COVID-19 rates of infection will continue to strain the entire health care system.

To help address the unrelenting fiscal demands of the pandemic, we urgently ask that Congress pass the “Medicare Sequester COVID Moratorium Act” (H.R.315), legislation that would extend the congressionally enacted moratorium on Medicare sequester cuts through the duration of the public health emergency (PHE).

Congress recognized early on the pandemic created severe financial strains on our nation's health care system, including physician practices. Wisely, it provided 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 is swiftly approaching. We are concerned, however, that without the proposed moratorium, the pending sequestration will further damage physician practices.

A report by the American Medical Association entitled “[Changes in Medicare Physician Spending During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)” analyzed Medicare claims data exclusive to physician services and found spending dropped as much as 57 percent below expected pre-pandemic levels in April of 2020. Medicare spending on physician services partially recovered from the April low but was still 12 percent less than expected by the end of June 2020. During the first half of 2020, the cumulative estimated reduction in Medicare physician spending associated with the pandemic was \$9.4 billion (19%). The continued negative fiscal effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on physician practices is undeniable.

In addition, the Congressional Budget Office recently issued a statement about the *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021*, saying it would trigger the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010 (PAYGO) and cause Medicare spending reductions of an estimated 4 percent, or \$36 billion, next year. We strongly oppose these arbitrary and capricious across-the-board Medicare fee cuts at a time when overall Medicare expenditures on physicians are down. The impact of these additional cuts on already COVID-distressed physician practices would be devastating.

It is critical for Congress to take immediate steps to further pause the Medicare sequester. **We, therefore, strongly urge you to pass the “Medicare Sequester COVID Moratorium Act” (H.R.315) — bipartisan legislation that would continue the current Medicare sequester moratorium for the duration of the PHE.**

Sincerely,

Association of Black Cardiologists

American Society of Nuclear Cardiology

American Vein & Lymphatic Society

CardioVascular Coalition

Dialysis Vascular Access Coalition

Heart Failure Society of America

Heart Rhythm Society

Mended Hearts, Inc.

Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions

Society of Cardiovascular Computed Tomography

Society for Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance