February 7, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Ranking Member
House Ways and Means Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing surgeons and anesthesiologists, we urge you to hold hearings on the future of the Medicare physician fee schedule and the status of other policies included in the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA), including the Quality Payment Program. An assessment of potential policy options warrants urgent discussion, particularly given that the cost of implementing a durable physician payment system continues to increase over time.

As you have witnessed over the last several years, the negative impact of the Medicare physician fee schedule's budget neutrality requirements has been compounded by the lack of a mechanism to account for inflation. Each year, this results in drastic cuts to payments for medically necessary patient care delivered by surgeons, physicians, and other health care professionals reimbursed under this system. We are thankful that Congress has intervened to stop these cuts for the past two years. However, Congress must implement a long-term solution that will stabilize the system.

Beyond the impact of the ongoing coronavirus public health emergency, our practices are struggling to keep up with the rising costs of delivering care. While MACRA included modest positive payment updates in the fee schedule, it left a six-year gap from 2020 through 2025, during which there are no payment updates at all. The combination of these multiple factors results in steep reductions to payments for physicians' services in an environment where all other sectors of the Medicare program are receiving a positive payment update to account for increasing costs. In fact, several members of the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission recently expressed deep concerns about the challenges created by MACRA that leave physicians without an adjustment during a period of high inflation.

We look forward to working together in 2022 to find solutions to address the long-term stability of the Medicare physician payment system and reform policies to help MACRA reach its intended goals of a sustainable value-based delivery system. However, to accomplish this, policymakers must begin to consider solutions to the ongoing structural problems with this broken payment system.

We, therefore, urge you to hold hearings to examine these issues to ensure that the Medicare program is working for patients, supporting timely access to care, and allowing physicians to maintain sustainable practices that can invest in quality improvement and patient safety initiatives.

Sincerely,

American College of Surgeons

American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery

American Academy of Ophthalmology

American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head & Neck Surgery

American Association of Neurological Surgeons

American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American College of Osteopathic Surgeons

American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society

American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery

American Society for Surgery of the Hand

American Society of Anesthesiologists

American Society of Breast Surgeons

American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery

American Society of Colon & Rectal Surgeons

American Society of Plastic Surgeons

American Society of Retina Specialists

American Urogynecologic Society

American Urological Association

Congress of Neurological Surgeons

Society for Vascular Surgery

Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons

Society of Gynecologic Oncology

The Society of Thoracic Surgeons