

# Lobbyists Anticipate Doc Caucus MACRA Reform Bill Next Month, May Push Package In Lane Duck

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(Inside Health Policy)

The GOP and Democratic House doctor caucuses are working together and hope to introduce comprehensive reforms to the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA) as soon as next month, multiple sources told *Inside Health Policy* Thursday (April 30). The package is expected to include an overhaul of the physician bonus payment program and potential tweaks to the CMS Innovation Center and other policies that support new alternative payment models (APMs), in addition to changes to the physician fee pay system.

Sources say lawmakers aim to move the package in the lame duck, potentially hitched to a year-end health package, which gives stakeholders time to help shape those reforms.

“There’s a very big push from the House doctors’ caucuses,” National Association of ACOs (NAACOS) Director of Legislative Affairs Robert Daley said at the group’s spring conference last Friday (April 24). “And part of what they’re doing is they’re putting together a longer-term framework to reform physician payments, to move more towards inflationary updates – and we’ve been engaged with those discussions and really pushing to say that APMs need a place at the table.”

Daley said those conversations have centered not only on securing more predictable physician payment updates but also ensuring value-based care models receive stronger support, including higher payment incentives and more attainable thresholds for providers seeking to qualify for Advanced Alternative Payment Model (APM) bonuses.

According to one source who’s been in deep talks with lawmakers and their staffers, they’ve been pushing for the bill to maintain the conversion factor bonus for APMs, fund

primary care and include a study on the CMS Innovation Center (CMMI) evaluation process that they believe to be undermining progress.

**Still, Daley said 2026 is likely to be a “bridge year,” with major legislative movement likely being deferred until the post-election lame duck session.** That’s when lawmakers may assemble a broader end-of-year health package that could include physician payment reforms, APM bonus extensions and other expiring health extenders, he said.

“This is probably something that’s going to be done in the lame duck, after the midterm elections,” Daley said. “The midterm elections will be very politically charged, and once we have an idea of who will be in charge of Congress come the beginning of next year, I think we’ll have a good idea of how they can start to put together an end-of-year package.”

“There’s a whole host of expiring health programs that will be coming up at the end of the year,” he added.

Earlier this year, the leaders of partisan House doctor caucuses jumpstarted the conversations with a joint request for information on potential reforms to the unpopular Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) and to the CMS Innovation Center.

According to a congressional staffer closely involved in reviewing stakeholder feedback, who spoke in March at an Accountable for Health conference, the responses largely centered on MIPS.

Meanwhile, as stakeholders continue to work on the comprehensive package, lawmakers continue to release legislation targeting specific areas for reform. On March 31, for example, key doctor caucus lawmakers unveiled the bipartisan Provider Reimbursement Stability Act, which would link physician pay to inflation, increase the budget neutrality threshold, and limit annual payment adjustments to now more than 2.5%.

On Thursday, Reps. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA) and Herbert Conaway Jr. (D-NJ), also introduced legislation that would replace MIPS with a new “data-driven” payment system aimed at reducing administrative burden, scaling back penalties and improving performance feedback for physicians.

And Reps. Brad Schneider (D-IL) and Claudia Tenney (R-NY) recently introduced a bill that would establish a permanent full-risk accountable care organization (ACO) program.

While lobbyists are still expecting that broader package from the House doctor caucuses that would address both MIPS and advanced APM incentives, these bills add to a growing slate of proposals that could ultimately be folded into the year-end health package during the lame duck session. -- *Jalen Brown* ([jbrown@iwpnews.com](mailto:jbrown@iwpnews.com)), *Amy Lotven* ([alotven@iwpnews.com](mailto:alotven@iwpnews.com))