

November 1, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

Subject: Support Passage of H.R. 849, the Protecting Seniors' Access to Medicare Act

Dear Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the undersigned medical and dental organizations, representing physicians, dentists and the patients they serve, we urge you and all members of the House of Representatives to support passage of H.R. 849, the Protecting Seniors' Access to Medicare Act. This legislation, with nearly 270 bipartisan supporters, is cosponsored by Representatives Phil Roe, MD (R-Tenn.), and Raul Ruiz, MD (D-Calif.), and would repeal the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB).

Based on recent estimates by the Medicare Trustees, in the near future, IPAB could be triggered; thus setting up a process that will result in billions of Medicare cuts. As such, America's physicians are concerned that the strict budgetary targets and other limitations imposed on the IPAB will ultimately threaten the ability of our nation's seniors and disabled to obtain the health care they need when they need it.

Furthermore, we note that from the beginning of Medicare, members of Congress have played an essential role in shaping policies that best meet the needs of their communities and constituents to ensure that the health care system is equipped to care for diverse populations across the country. With the advent of the IPAB, however, the people's elected representatives will no longer have power over Medicare payment policy. Instead, these major health policy decisions will rest in the hands of 15 unelected and largely unaccountable individuals. Even worse, if IPAB fails to report recommendations or never becomes operational, this power will rest solely in the hands of a single person — the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Additionally, fewer than half of the IPAB members can be health care providers, and none are permitted to be practicing physicians or be otherwise employed. Thus, not only does the creation of IPAB severely limit congressional authority, it essentially eliminates the transparency of hearings, debate and a meaningful opportunity for critical stakeholder input. Finally, IPAB decisions are not subject to judicial review, granting the board even more unprecedented powers.

While we recognize the need to reduce the federal budget deficit and control the growth of health care spending, the IPAB is simply the wrong solution for addressing these budgetary challenges. With the advent of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA) and other value-based payment programs, physicians are working to improve health care quality and drive down Medicare costs. However, rather than this thoughtful approach to cost containment and quality improvement to enhance the value of the Medicare program, the IPAB is merely a blunt instrument to reduce what Medicare pays for medical treatments and will bring progress on value-based care to a screeching halt.

Leaving Medicare payment decisions in the hands of an unelected, unaccountable body with minimal congressional oversight will negatively affect timely access to quality health care for our country's senior citizens and those with disabilities. We urge Democrats and Republicans to come together and support passage of H.R. 849 to repeal the IPAB once and for all.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Specialty Medicine
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Ophthalmology
American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery
American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American College of Cardiology
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Mohs Surgery
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons
American College of Rheumatology
American College of Surgeons
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Gastroenterological Association
American Medical Association
American Society for Dermatologic Surgery Association
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
American Society for Mohs Surgery
American Society for Radiation Oncology
American Society of Anesthesiologists
American Society of Breast Surgeons
American Society of Echocardiography
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Society of Plastic Surgeons
American Society of Nuclear Cardiology
American Urological Association
Association of Black Cardiologists
College of American Pathologists
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
National Association of Spine Specialists
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions
Society for Vascular Surgery

cc: Members, U.S. House of Representatives