

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

We write to request that you urgently address the 3.37 percent cut to Medicare payments that went into effect on January 1, 2024. Failure to address these cuts will threaten the continued ability of physicians and other healthcare providers to care for their patients.

We in Congress must continue our partnership with the healthcare provider community to ensure that Medicare patients retain access to quality care. The United States is experiencing a critical shortage of physicians and healthcare providers. Estimates highlight a projected shortfall of up to 124,000 physicians by 2034¹ and a shortfall of up to 73,310 allied health professionals by 2036². A major contributing factor to this unfortunate reality is our Medicare physician payment system, which has failed to maintain physician reimbursement at levels that adequately incentivize high-quality care.

After three consecutive years of Medicare payment reductions, healthcare providers are at a breaking point and are struggling to maintain access to care for the Medicare beneficiaries they treat. Facing a nearly 10 percent reduction in Medicare payments over the past four years, rising practice costs, workforce shortages, and financial uncertainty resulting from the pandemic, some practices are already limiting the number of Medicare patients they see, or the types of services offered. It is anticipated that these cuts will be felt hardest by smaller, independent practices, like those in rural and underserved areas that continue to face significant health care access challenges.

On behalf of patients and healthcare workers, Congress must urgently work together with the provider community to come up with long-term legislative solutions to reform the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA). These efforts are critical to supporting patients' access to high-quality Medicare-covered services and bolstering our healthcare workforce. Specifically, we must ensure its intended goal of shifting towards value-based care is fulfilled.

In the interim, the most important step that Congress can take to create stability in the Medicare program is to address the cut to Medicare payments. We as policymakers must ensure that healthcare providers who treat Medicare patients continue to have the necessary financial support to care for our nation's seniors.

We appreciate your attention to this critical matter and look forward to working together on this issue.

Sincerely,

¹ <https://www.aamc.org/media/54681/download?attachment>

² <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/data-research/projecting-health-workforce-supply-demand>