



Physicians Caring for Texans

December 4, 2020

The Honorable John Cornyn
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz
127A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Need to address 2021 Medicare physician payment reductions

Dear Senators Cornyn and Cruz:

On behalf of the Texas Medical Association (TMA) and our more than 53,000 Texas physicians and medical student members, I write urging you to support efforts to prevent cuts to Medicare physician payments and to include these provisions in upcoming end-of-year legislation. The cuts the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) finalized in the 2021 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule will likely (1) further devastate our health care system, which is already stressed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and (2) jeopardize patient access to medically necessary services over the long term.

The 2021 final Medicare Physician Fee Schedule includes several positive attributes, including much-needed payment increases for physicians delivering primary and other essential outpatient and office-based care to some of our nation's most vulnerable patients. These changes should take effect on Jan. 1, 2021, as planned. TMA continues to support these changes.

However, a statutory budget neutrality rule requires that any increases in Medicare payments for these office visits, also known as evaluation and management services, must be offset by corresponding decreases. As a result, many practitioners including surgeons, specialists, therapists, and others face substantial cuts beginning on Jan. 1, 2021.

Physicians continue to reel from the effects of the COVID-19 public health emergency as they continue to serve patients during this global pandemic. The payment cuts finalized by CMS pose a threat to patients and physicians.

TMA looks forward to seeing legislation enacted that averts these cuts. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dan Finch, TMA vice president of advocacy, at dan.finch@texmed.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diana L. Fite", written over a large, light-colored oval shape.

Diana L. Fite, MD
President
Texas Medical Association