November 10, 2011

The Honorable Patty Murray
Co-Chair
Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murray:

In a few weeks, current law requires Medicare physician payments to be slashed by over 27 percent because of the flawed sustainable growth rate (SGR) update formula. The undersigned national medical specialty organizations and state medical societies are writing once again to urge the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to include a repeal of the SGR in the legislation that it is required to report by November 23, 2011.

The uncertainty and instability that the annual threat of SGR-induced payment cuts cause for physician practices can not be overstated. Congress has stepped in 12 times over the past decade to stop pending cuts; Congress had to take action five times to stop the 2010 cut alone. At the same time, physicians are being required by Medicare legislation passed by Congress to make significant changes to their practices that involve both financial investments and a series of workflow changes that affect their productivity.

With cuts of this magnitude pending, Congress should not wait until the 11th hour to take action. The Select Committee is the proper venue for the hard choices and honest budgeting needed to repeal the SGR and eliminate the shortfall in Medicare funding that grows worse each time Congress takes short-term actions to stop imminent cuts. And, with the 2011 calendar running out, no other pathway toward real SGR reform is evident.

To stabilize stressed physician practices, assure that Medicare and TRICARE patients maintain their choice of physician, and take the fiscally responsible course, we are asking you to repeal the SGR now and enable the transition to payment and care delivery innovations that will promote high quality, well coordinated, cost effective care.

Sincerely,

American Medical Association
Aerospace Medical Association
AMDA – Dedicated to Long Term Care Medicine
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine

American Academy of Ophthalmology
American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
American Academy of Pain Medicine
American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
American Academy of Sleep Medicine
American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists
American Association of Clinical Urologists
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Neuromuscular and Electrodiagnostic Medicine
American College of Cardiology
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Gastroenterology
American College of Mohs Surgery
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American College of Osteopathic Internists
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
American College of Phlebology
American College of Physicians
American College of Radiation Oncology
American College of Radiology
American College of Rheumatology
American College of Surgeons
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Gastroenterological Association
American Geriatrics Society
American Medical Group Association
American Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Society for Clinical Pathology
American Society for Dermatologic Surgery Association
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
American Society for Radiation Oncology
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
American Society for Surgery of the Hand
American Society of Anesthesiologists
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Society of Hematology
American Society of Nuclear Cardiology
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology
American Thoracic Society
American Urological Association
Association of American Medical Colleges
College of American Pathologists
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Heart Rhythm Society

Infectious Diseases Society of America
Joint Council of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology
Medical Group Management Association
North American Spine Society
Renal Physicians Association
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions
Society for Vascular Surgery
Society of Hospital Medicine
The Endocrine Society
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

Medical Association of the State of Alabama
Alaska State Medical Association
Arizona Medical Association
Arkansas Medical Society
California Medical Association
Colorado Medical Society
Connecticut State Medical Society
Medical Society of Delaware
Medical Society of the District of Columbia
Florida Medical Association Inc
Medical Association of Georgia
Hawaii Medical Association
Idaho Medical Association
Illinois State Medical Society
Indiana State Medical Association
Iowa Medical Society
Kansas Medical Society
Kentucky Medical Association
Louisiana State Medical Society
Maine Medical Association
MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society
Massachusetts Medical Society
Michigan State Medical Society
Minnesota Medical Association
Mississippi State Medical Association
Missouri State Medical Association
Montana Medical Association
Nebraska Medical Association
Nevada State Medical Association
New Hampshire Medical Society
Medical Society of New Jersey
New Mexico Medical Society
Medical Society of the State of New York
North Carolina Medical Society
North Dakota Medical Association

Ohio State Medical Association
Oklahoma State Medical Association
Oregon Medical Association
Pennsylvania Medical Society
Rhode Island Medical Society
South Carolina Medical Association
South Dakota State Medical Association
Tennessee Medical Association
Texas Medical Association
Utah Medical Association
Vermont Medical Society
Medical Society of Virginia
Washington State Medical Association
West Virginia State Medical Association
Wisconsin Medical Society
Wyoming Medical Society

cc: House Committee on Energy and Commerce
House Committee on Ways and Means
Senate Committee on Finance