



Michael D. Maves, MD, MBA, Executive Vice President, CEO

June 25, 2008

Dear Senator:

The American Medical Association (AMA) strongly supports the “Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008” (H.R. 6331), that is currently awaiting action in the Senate. With fewer than three legislative days remaining before devastating cuts are scheduled to take place, the AMA urges all Senators to support immediate passage of H.R. 6331, which passed the House by a vote of 355-59 earlier this week. This is a critical vote for the physician community.

On December 18, 2007, the Senate agreed by unanimous consent to delay Medicare cuts until July 1, 2008. The House followed suit the next day by a vote of 411-3. The Senate must act this week to meet its self-imposed deadline by acting immediately to prevent payment cuts from going into effect. This cannot wait until after the Fourth of July Recess.

The AMA appreciates the broad bipartisan support expressed by many members of the Senate for halting pending Medicare physician payment cuts and replacing them with positive updates. These cuts threaten to undermine access to care for millions of Medicare beneficiaries. It is critical that the Senate pass legislation promptly that provides positive payment updates for the next 18 months to allow the next Congress and a new Administration the opportunity to work together to finally replace the failed Sustainable Growth Rate formula.

Additionally, H.R. 6331 includes important reforms to the Medicare Advantage (MA) program by eliminating the deeming authority for health plans that automatically designates a physician as part of an insurer's network even though the physician has not received or signed a contract. This important reform does not represent a cut in MA payment rates, it simply applies requirements to MA private fee-for-service plans that are already in place for other MA plans.

In the coming years, critical reforms must be considered if Medicare is to continue to keep its promise to our nation's senior and disabled populations. We look forward to working with all members of Congress in that endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Maves". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the left of a vertical red line.

Michael D. Maves, MD, MBA