

December 4, 2023

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Johnson, and Minority Leader Jeffries:

On behalf of the Endocrine Society, the world's largest professional organization of endocrinologists, I urge Congress to pass legislation to avert the 3.37% cut to Medicare payments which is scheduled to occur on January 1, 2024. Founded in 1916, the Endocrine Society represents approximately 18,000 physicians and scientists engaged in the treatment and research of endocrine disorders, such as diabetes, hypertension, infertility, obesity, osteoporosis, endocrine tumors cancers (i.e., thyroid, adrenal, ovarian, pituitary) and thyroid disease. Our membership includes over 11,000 clinicians who are on the front lines in treating diabetes and obesity, which are two of the most common chronic illnesses in the United States. Many of our members treat Medicare beneficiaries with these costly, chronic conditions, and averting these cuts will help ensure those beneficiaries continue to have access to high-quality care.

This looming payment reduction comes as result of the budget neutrality adjustments in the final Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) final rule for Calendar Year 2024 and the expiration of 1.25% of the conversion factor increase Congress provided at the end of 2023. These cuts come as physicians continue to struggle with the effects of increased costs due to inflation. Unfortunately, physicians have experienced over 30 years of stagnant Medicare reimbursement rates. The conversion factor for physician payments has only increased by \$2.00 since 1992. The MPFS does not have an appropriate mechanism to ensure consistent updates in physician reimbursement and is the only Medicare fee schedule without an inflationary update. This has resulted in an annual cycle of looming Medicare payment reductions for Congress to address. We urge you to act now to avoid this 3.37% reduction, and to work with the Endocrine Society and other physician specialties to pass comprehensive



Medicare reform legislation that provides physician payment updates that keep pace with the Medicare Economic Index and practice costs.

Providing stability to the physician payment system is important to ensure that there is improved access to endocrinologists across the country. Data shows that 78.5% of counties in the United States have no practicing endocrinologists.¹ This forces our patients to travel long distances and endure significant wait times to see an endocrinologist. Endocrinologists also have some of the lowest salaries amongst medical subspecialists and like other physicians enter the workforce with significant medical student debt. All these issues are even more troubling for our members when combined with the annual cycle of looming Medicare cuts.

We urge you to pass legislation that averts this looming cut and implements reforms that bring stability to the Medicare physician payment system. We stand ready to work with you to address the flaws in Medicare payment. Thank you for your attention to this important issue. If you have any questions or we can be of any further assistance, please contact Rob Goldsmith, Director of Advocacy and Policy at rgoldsmith@endocrine.org.

Sincerely,

Stephen Hammes, MD, PhD
President
Endocrine Society

Cc: Chairman Ron Wyden, Senate Finance Committee
Ranking Member Mike Crapo, Senate Finance Committee
Chairman Jason Smith, House Committee on Ways & Means
Ranking Member Richard Neal, House Committee on Ways & Means