



Physicians Caring for Texans

October 26, 2020

The Honorable Michael C. Burgess, MD
United States House of Representatives
2161 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for H.R. 8505

Dear Dr. Burgess:

On behalf of our more than 53,000 Texas physician and medical student members, the Texas Medical Association (TMA) appreciates the opportunity to express our support for [H.R. 8505](#), which provides a one-year waiver of budget neutrality adjustments under the Medicare physician fee schedule. We strongly urge the entire Texas delegation to show support for Texas Medicare beneficiaries and physicians by co-sponsoring this bill.

TMA supports the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS') changes to recognize the unduly low payments for office visits. However, we encourage policymakers to stop penalizing doctors with the current budget-neutral methodology. The current system is designed so that when one specialty is paid appropriately for medical services rendered, others must be penalized. This has been an ongoing problem since the budget-neutrality clause was enacted. In this latest example, the 2021 proposed Medicare physician fee schedule, CMS increased office visit payments to an appropriate amount. The budget-neutrality clause requires CMS to decrease the conversion factor to offset any increase in payments. This offset will cause irreparable harm to both physicians and patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. For office visits to be paid appropriately, payment for other services was decreased, causing the conversion factor for 2021 to decrease by an estimated 11%. This action is detrimental to physicians and may negatively impact access to care for Medicare patients.

Since 2000, TMA has been monitoring physician payments in relationship to hospital, skilled nursing facility, and home health payments. We have watched physician payments steadily decline while others increase. The costs associated with living and operating a business grow each year, yet physicians do not see increases equal to that inflation – they see decreases.

The COVID-19 public health emergency has financially devastated physician practices and health systems. A TMA Practice Viability Survey conducted in May 2020 asked Texas physicians how the pandemic has affected their practice revenue. Sixty-three percent of the respondents reported their revenue had decreased by 51% to 100%. It is plain to see that physicians are hurting. And therefore it is imperative they are not further penalized by the 11% cut due to the budget neutrality clause.

To ensure access to care for senior citizens, one of our more vulnerable populations, physician payments must increase, not decrease. That is why TMA lauds your leadership in introducing HR 8505.

We look forward to seeing this legislation enacted. Thank you for the opportunity to offer our support of this bill. 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, MD". The signature is stylized with a large, looping flourish at the end.

Diana L. Fite, MD
President
Texas Medical Association