



AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION

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August 10, 2011

The Honorable Patty Murray
Co-Chair
Joint Select Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling
Co-Chair
Joint Select Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murray and Congressman Hensarling:

Congratulations on your selection as Co-Chairs of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction. The work that lies ahead is both challenging and important to the future of our country. We applaud your willingness to lead this important committee and for your commitment to the objectives laid out in the Budget Control Act.

The American Osteopathic Association (AOA), which represents the nation's 78,000 osteopathic physicians, recognizes that difficult choices must be made as part of this process. We also recognize that many programs important to our members and their patients will be impacted.

This process presents a unique opportunity to address numerous long-standing policy issues in a meaningful manner outside of historical obstacles and limitations. We believe that the issues associated with the Medicare physician payment formula, specifically the sustainable growth rate (SGR), should be a priority. We recognize that this process is designed to promote deficit reduction. However, true deficit reduction cannot be achieved without addressing a systemic flaw in our nation's largest health program. The SGR is an anchor on the Medicare program. It prohibits innovation, contributes to access issues for millions of seniors, and serves as a disincentive to physician participation in the Medicare program.

It is our opinion that any meaningful proposal aimed at addressing the financial stability of the Medicare program must address this issue in a meaningful and long-term manner. Any proposal that fails to address the over \$300 billion "debt" associated with the SGR is a continuation of 12 years of policies that have contributed to our current situation.

We understand that a solution to the SGR issue is not easy, but we believe there are appropriate options that promote quality and efficiency, preserve access to care for current and future generations of beneficiaries, and build upon the delivery system and quality improvement innovations implemented over the past few years. The AOA laid out our recommendations in a letter to the House Energy and Commerce Committee in May.

Again, we applaud your leadership and look forward to working with you and the members of the Joint Select Committee.

Sincerely,



Martin S. Levine, DO
President

C: The Honorable John Boehner, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Harry Reid, Majority Leader, United States Senate
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader, United States Senate