



JAMES L. MADARA, MD
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CEO

ama-assn.org
t (312) 464-5000

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The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221 U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230 U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reid and Senator McConnell:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to express our strong opposition to H.R. 4302, the “Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014,” which was adopted yesterday by the House of Representatives through an extraordinary procedural maneuver. We urge a NO vote when this bill comes before the Senate next week.

For more than 10 years, members of Congress on both sides of the aisle have worked to repeal the ill-conceived Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula that was intended to limit Medicare expenditures for care provided to Medicare beneficiaries. Since 2002, Congress has enacted 16 temporary patches to prevent cuts to physician services that would devastate access to care for our nation’s seniors and disabled population. Enactment of H.R. 4302 would represent the 17th time that Congress has chosen to extend rather than solve the problem.

The case for repeal of the so-called SGR is stronger than ever. The bipartisan, bicameral agreement by the three congressional committees of jurisdiction over the Medicare program would improve quality, increase care coordination, and lower total costs and is strongly supported by the AMA and over 600 other physician organizations.

Senate passage of H.R. 4302, however, will eliminate prospects for action on the bipartisan repeal package this year and is likely to result in Congress taking up patch number 18 next March. Failure to implement a permanent repeal and replace policy will cause further erosion of physician and beneficiary confidence in this increasingly unstable system.

Rather than passing H.R. 4302, the Senate should return to the bipartisan process that brought us this far and continue to provide the leadership needed to repeal this historic mistake. If further “patches” are necessary, they should be no longer than is necessary to achieve this result and should not cannibalize the already agreed-upon replacement policy. Anything more would mean continued delay and increasing uncertainty for millions of Medicare beneficiaries and the physicians who have dedicated their lives to caring for them.

Please vote NO on H.R. 4302 so that those who have come so far to preserve access to Medicare services for our senior and disabled citizens may continue their work.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD

cc: U.S. Senate