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SCHWARTZ AND ROE UNITE IN BIPARTISAN CALL FOR MEDICARE PHYSICIAN PAYMENT REFORM

Washington, D.C.—U.S. Reps. Allyson Schwartz (D-PA) and Phil Roe (R-TN) continue to garner bipartisan support to repeal the Medicare physician payment system. Drawing health policy experts from across the ideological spectrum, Schwartz and Roe hosted a briefing today to highlight the broad bipartisan support for a comprehensive fix to the flawed sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula. Since 2003, Congress has taken steps each year to override the cuts required by the flawed SGR formula. Unless Congress acts again before the end of this year, physicians treating Medicare patients will see their reimbursements cut by 29.5 percent beginning on January 1, 2012.

Recently, Schwartz and Roe secured support from more than 115 members of Congress to call on the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to repeal SGR and include a comprehensive fix in their proposal to Congress next month.

“For years, the cost of this failed policy has been hidden by short-term fixes,” Schwartz said. “There is overwhelming bipartisan support, coupled with tremendous fiscal urgency, to finally enact a long-term SGR fix. We have a choice: continue distorting the picture of our nation’s fiscal status, or restore fiscal discipline and certainty by eliminating the \$300 billion debt that has accumulated as a result of the SGR. The super committee should use this historic opportunity to set out a clear path towards comprehensive Medicare payment reform. Our seniors and America’s fiscal health are counting on it.”

“To ensure patient access to physician care, we must permanently fix the Medicare sustainable growth rate formula (SGR),” Roe said. “Physicians are currently threatened with a 29.5 percent cut in their payments unless Congress can end these budgetary games. A cut of this magnitude would leave many, if not most, Medicare patients without access to physicians. Fixing the SGR will help bring stability to our medical system.”

The briefing featured the following three prominent health care experts who discussed prospects for reforming the Medicare physician payment system:

- **Mark McClellan, M.D., Ph.D.**, Director of the Engelberg Center for Health Care Reform at the Brookings Institution
- **Joseph Antos, Ph.D.**, Wilson H. Taylor Scholar in Health Care and Retirement Policy at the American Enterprise Institute
- **Stuart Guterman, M.A.**, Vice President, Payment and System Reform at the Commonwealth Fund

Dozens of organizations representing seniors and health care providers also attended the briefing to express their support for reforming the Medicare physician payment formula.

“We applaud Representatives Schwartz and Roe for holding today’s briefing on the impact of the flawed sustainable growth rate on access to care for Medicare beneficiaries and the negative impact this policy has on our nation’s economy,” said **Martin S. Levine, DO, President, American Osteopathic Association**. “For the past 10 years Congress has put off taking the necessary action to reform this payment policy. As a result, we now have a policy that is an economic anchor on the Medicare program and our economy. We urge Congress to take the necessary steps to permanently fix this failed policy.”

Max Richtman, President and CEO of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, noted the widespread support for this effort among seniors. “We thank Reps. Schwartz and Roe for bringing together Medicare beneficiary and provider groups to discuss improvements to the Medicare payment system,” Richtman said. “The National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare’s millions of members understand that cuts in reimbursements to their physicians could have a negative impact on their access to care.”

“The AMA appreciates the bipartisan work of Representatives Schwartz and Roe to encourage their colleagues in Congress to repeal the fatally flawed Medicare physician payment formula,” said AMA President Peter W. Carmel, M.D. “The AMA continues to believe that the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction should engage in honest accounting and end the cycle of automatic scheduled cuts and short-term patches that only grows the size of the problem. It is time to stabilize Medicare for patients and physicians, and stop increasing the long-term cost to taxpayers.”

“Physicians cannot manage their practices with this annual uncertainty and patients cannot count on receiving the health care they deserve if physician practices cannot afford to continue accepting new Medicare patients,” said **Glen Stream, MD, MBI, President, American Academy of Family Physicians**. “On behalf of the 100,300 members of the American Academy of Family Physicians, we greatly appreciate the bipartisan efforts of Rep. Allyson Schwartz and Rep. Phil Roe to address this immediate and important need for an appropriate payment system. As providers of primary medical care, our members are on the front-line of the health care system and they are looking for thoughtful legislators like these to help Congress finally stabilize the Medicare payment system.”

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