



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
INTERNAL MEDICINE | *Doctors for Adults*®

June 22, 2008

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman
House Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rangel:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians, representing 125,000 internal medicine physicians and medical student members, I am writing to congratulate you and Chairman John Dingell (D-MI) on the introduction of the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008, H.R. 6331, and to pledge our support for its enactment. ACP is the largest medical specialty society—and second largest physician membership organization—in the United States.

The College is able to enthusiastically support H.R. 6331 because it addresses and incorporates three of our top legislative priorities:

- *The Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) physician payment cuts will be replaced by 18 months of positive updates.* The 10.6 percent payment cut on July 1 will be replaced by continuing current calendar year payment rates for the remainder of 2008. In calendar year 2009, an estimated 5 percent cut in payments will be replaced with a 1.1 percent positive increase. These provisions are essential to preserve beneficiaries' access to physician services.
- *Medicare payment policies will be improved to address the growing crisis in access to primary care services.* Studies show that primary care is associated with improved outcomes and lower costs, yet a growing shortage of primary care physicians “threatens the foundation of primary care” in the United States (Health Affairs, April, 2008). Specifically, H.R. 6331 changes Medicare budget rules to increase the Medicare relative value units (RVUs) for office visits and other services provided principally by primary care physicians, starting on January 1, 2009. This will result in an immediate and continuing improvement in payments for primary care services, not only from Medicare, but from other payers that use the Medicare RVUs.

- *It includes increased funding for the Medicare medical home demonstration project and authorizes the Secretary to expand the demo if it achieves measurable improvements in patient care.* The Patient-Centered Medical Home is an innovative model of health care delivery that recognizes the value of care coordinated by a personal physician, working in a practice that has the information systems and capabilities needed to attain better outcomes—supported by a better reimbursement system that compensates physicians for care coordination services not reimbursed under traditional Medicare. H.R. 6331 will help assure that this demo receives the funding and authority needed to fully evaluate the Patient-Centered Medical Home and expand it to more physicians and beneficiaries.

H.R. 6331 also includes other policies supported by ACP including expanded coverage of preventive services and phasing out the higher Medicare co-payments for mental health benefits.

Based on ACP's policies, we are pleased to lend our full support to the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 and to urge its enactment.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeffrey P. Harris".

Jeffrey Harris, MD, FACP
President