Illinois State Medical Society

LETTER SENT TO MEMBERS OF THE ILLINOIS CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

September 16, 2026

On behalf of the physician members of the Illinois State Medical Society (ISMS), I write to strongly urge you to co-sponsor H.R. 9693, the "Patients First Act." This comprehensive, bipartisan legislation would reform the Medicare physician payment system and replace the annual cycle of cuts and temporary patches with a payment system that is stable, predictable, and more reflective of the actual costs of delivering care.

The need for reform is urgent. When adjusted for inflation in practice costs, Medicare physician payment has fallen approximately 33 percent since 2001. Physicians remain the only Medicare provider type that does not receive an annual payment update tied to inflation. This growing gap has forced many practices - particularly small, rural, and independent practices - to consolidate or limit the number of Medicare patients they serve, threatening timely access to care for millions of patients in our states.

The Patients First Act addresses these structural flaws. It establishes a permanent annual payment update linked to the Medicare Economic Index; modernizes outdated budget neutrality policies to prevent destabilizing across-the-board cuts; replaces the Merit-based Incentive Payment System with a streamlined, clinician-driven quality program that reduces penalties and administrative burden; and preserves meaningful incentives for physicians participating in alternative payment models. These reforms align with the Characteristics of a Rational Medicare Physician Payment System, the framework endorsed by more than 120 state medical associations and national medical specialty societies.

Please join your Congressional colleagues in co-sponsoring H.R. 9693 so that physicians can have confidence that their commitment to serving Medicare beneficiaries will be supported by an equitable and predictable Medicare payment system.

Thank you for your support of the physicians and patients of Illinois.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Oliver, M.D.
Chair, Board of Trustees
Illinois State Medical Society

cc: Tripti C. Kataria, M.D.
Christine P. Bishof, M.D.
Alexander R. Lerner

Twenty North Michigan Avenue, Suite 700 Chicago, IL 60602 Web site: www.isms.org
Telephone: 312-782-1654 Toll Free: 800-782-4767 Fax: 312-782-2023