May 19, 2011

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
H-232 US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner:

On behalf of the below signed state medical associations and national specialty medical associations, we are writing to express our support for the "Medicare Patient Empowerment Act" (H.R. 1700) recently introduced by Representative Tom Price, MD (R-GA). This legislation will help to preserve the patient-physician relationship by allowing seniors to continue to use their Medicare benefit, even with physicians who do not accept Medicare patients. We urge your support and cosponsorship of this bill.

Today, physicians face a dizzying array of challenges. Constant uncertainty due to broken reimbursement systems and a growing tidal wave of documentation and reporting requirements places a strain on the patient-physician relationship. Increasingly, physicians are searching for a way to reduce these burdens so that they may focus on what they are trained to do, namely provide excellent medical care to patients who depend on their guidance and skill while at the same time maintaining a viable medical practice. For a growing number of physicians, this means greatly limiting the number of Medicare patients they see or even leaving the Medicare program all together.

Unfortunately, for most Medicare beneficiaries, this also means the end of a relationship with a physician whom they have come to trust. Currently, seniors who wish to see a doctor who does not accept Medicare must pay for all services by that physician out of their own pocket. The physician may not seek reimbursement from Medicare for the care provided, nor will Medicare reimburse the beneficiary. This, despite the fact that seniors have paid into the program in the form of payroll taxes their throughout their working lives.

The Medicare Patient Empowerment Act would restore this guarantee of care from any physician for these seniors. For visits to a non-Medicare physician, the Medicare Patient Empowerment Act means Medicare would continue to pay the amount it typically covers today, with the patient paying the doctor directly for the difference between what Medicare pays and what the doctor charges. It would also enable physicians to help patients in financial need by permitting them to charge a lower amount than Medicare currently allows, something they are legally forbidden from doing today.

By allowing patients and physicians to independently and voluntarily contract for care, the Medicare Patient Empowerment Act puts control back into their hands and preserves the relationship with their physician. We urge you to cosponsor this legislation.

Sincerely,

Medical Association of the State of Alabama
Alaska State Medical Association
Arizona Medical Association

Arkansas Medical Society
California Medical Association
Colorado Medical Society
Connecticut State Medical Society
Medical Society of Delaware
Medical Society of the District of Columbia
Florida Medical Association Inc
Medical Association of Georgia
Hawaii Medical Association
Idaho Medical Association
Illinois State Medical Society
Indiana State Medical Association
Iowa Medical Society
Kansas Medical Society
Kentucky Medical Association
Louisiana State Medical Society
MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society
Michigan State Medical Society
Minnesota Medical Association
Mississippi State Medical Association
Missouri State Medical Association
Montana Medical Association
Nebraska Medical Association
Nevada State Medical Association
Medical Society of New Jersey
New Mexico Medical Society
Medical Society of the State of New York
North Carolina Medical Society
North Dakota Medical Association
Ohio State Medical Association
Oklahoma State Medical Association
Oregon Medical Association
Pennsylvania Medical Society
South Carolina Medical Association
South Dakota State Medical Association
Tennessee Medical Association
Texas Medical Association
Utah Medical Association
Medical Society of Virginia
Washington State Medical Association
West Virginia State Medical Association
Wyoming Medical Society

American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
American Academy of Ophthalmology
American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery
American Academy of Pain Medicine
American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American College of Chest Physicians

American College of Gastroenterology
American College of Mohs Surgery
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
American College of Osteopathic Internists
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons
American College of Radiology
American College of Rheumatology
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Medical Association
American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
American Society for Surgery of the Hand
American Society of Addiction Medicine
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons
American Society of Nuclear Cardiology
American Society of Plastic Surgeons
American Urological Association
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Medical Group Management Association
North American Spine Society
Society of Critical Care Medicine