

November 21, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, and Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of radiation oncology stakeholder organizations -- including radiation oncologists, medical physicists, medical dosimetrists, radiation oncology administrators and other members of the radiation oncology cancer care team, group practices, hospitals, device manufacturers and more -- we urge Congress to protect patients' access to life-saving cancer care by passing legislation before year-end to prevent significant Medicare payment cuts to radiation therapy services.

On Nov. 1, 2022, Medicare finalized reductions to radiation oncology under the Medicare physician fee schedule (MPFS) for 2023, with radiation oncology facing 4% cuts, among the steepest of any specialty. The cuts stem from a decrease in the Medicare conversion factor, budget neutrality requirements from prior changes to evaluation and management services, and the second year of clinical labor price updates. In addition, radiation oncology also faces additional cuts due to PAYGO and the expiration of the moratorium on the sequester. These cuts add to significant prior cuts to radiation therapy cancer services under the MPFS exceeding 20% over the last 10 years. An analysis by the American Society for Radiation Oncology further reveals 5-year reductions in reimbursement for standard courses of radiation therapy for breast cancer (-18%), prostate cancer (-30%) and lung cancer (-34%).

While reimbursement declines, costs are increasing by as much as 20%, according to radiation oncology practice leaders. Inflationary pressures, staff shortages, and patients requiring more complex radiation treatments, due to delays in diagnosis due to the COVID-19 PHE, have taken the nation's radiation oncology clinics, which treat more than one million patients with cancer each year, to the breaking point. The radiation oncology community requests immediate relief before year-end, while work begins in earnest on long-term Medicare physician payment reform.

Specifically, in year-end legislation, we respectfully request that Congress mitigate the impact of the clinical labor price update on those services most adversely impacted by the policy. In addition, we urge Congress to provide relief from the conversion factor/budget neutrality cuts and waive PAYGO.

Inaction will threaten access to state-of-the-art cancer care for patients close to their homes, forcing many to travel great distances, at great personal expense, for their daily radiation treatments. The year over year payment cuts are undermining radiation oncology's status as a high-value, cost-effective cancer treatment for Medicare beneficiaries, with total annual costs far less than those of just a few cancer drugs.

The radiation oncology community stands ready to work with Congress to achieve payment stability and move toward value-based payment in a reformed system. We are grateful for Congress' longstanding bipartisan support for radiation oncology and cancer patients, and we look forward to working with you to advance these critical cancer policy priorities.

Sincerely,

Accuray

AdvaMed

American Association of Medical Dosimetrists

American Association of Physicists in Medicine

American Brachytherapy Society

American College of Radiology

American Society for Radiation Oncology

American Society of Radiologic Technologists

Association of Community Cancer Centers

Duke University Health System

Elekta

GenesisCare

Isoray

Loyola University Chicago

Medical Group Management Association

Novocure

Providence

RefleXion Medical

Society for Radiation Oncology Administrators

The CyberKnife Coalition (CKC)

The National Association for Proton Therapy

The Radiosurgery Society

The US Oncology Network

Varian, a Siemens Healthineers Company

ViewRay