

Protect Seniors' Access to Needed Eye Care

Support H.R. 2474 and Help Bring Needed Stability to the Medicare Payment System

Summary

As physicians, doctors of optometry provide the overwhelming share of primary, medical, chronic, urgent and emergency eye health care America's Medicare beneficiaries need—from comprehensive eye exams to laser and other surgical procedures and everything in between.

While doctors of optometry appreciate the limited relief from the 3.4% cut that hit practices this year, Congress must do more to address the fact that the meteoric rise in the cost of providing care coupled with reduced Medicare payments are increasingly threatening access to essential eye and vision care.

That's why the AOA and other leading physician organizations are urging lawmakers to support and advance the **Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act (H.R. 2474)** to bring much needed stability to the Medicare payment system.

America's doctors of optometry are critical primary and medical eye care providers who have extensive, ongoing training to examine, diagnose, treat and manage ocular disorders, diseases and injuries. They also play an **important role in the management of systemic diseases with ocular manifestations including diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, autoimmune diseases and neurologic disease.**

Normal, age-related changes in visual function and ocular structures and increases in the prevalence and incidence of ocular and systemic disease with age combine to make comprehensive eye and vision care services particularly important for older adults. Left untreated, a range of eye and vision conditions can lead to problems with taking medications, keeping track of personal information, walking, watching television, driving and reading, and often create social isolation. **Early detection and treatment of these conditions have been shown to translate into substantial economic savings and result in improved quality of life.**

Doctors of optometry provide more than two-thirds of all primary eye and vision health care in the U.S. as well as covered medical eye care physician services, including therapeutic laser eye care and management of patients with glaucoma and other chronic conditions, to nearly seven million Medicare beneficiaries each year.

Today, approximately 34,000 optometrists are enrolled as Medicare physicians serving patients in nearly 10,000 communities across the country—and in roughly half of those communities, local optometrists are the only eye doctors available.



Doctors of optometry are the only eye doctors available in **more than half of the 10,000** communities in which they practice.

While doctors of optometry appreciate that Congress has taken action to reverse some of the 3.4% cut that took effect Jan. 1, reimbursement concerning continues to decline. According to an analysis of Medicare Trustees data, when adjusted for inflation, Medicare payments to optometrists and other physicians have declined by 26% from 2001-2023.



Medicare payments have declined by **26%** from 2001-2023.

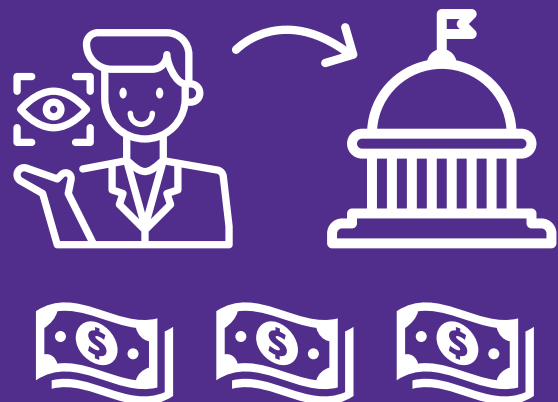
The failure of Medicare reimbursement to keep pace with the true cost of providing care, combined with year-over-year cuts resulting from the application of budget neutrality and sequestration, **clearly demonstrates that the Medicare payment system is broken.**

That's why the AOA and other physician organizations are backing the **Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act (H.R. 2474)**, which would apply an inflationary update to help bring budgetary stability as optometrists—many of whom are small-business owners—contend with a wide range of shifting economic factors, such as increasing administrative burdens, staff salaries, office rent and purchasing of essential technology.

The idea has been endorsed by the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC), **which has recommended that Congress increase Medicare physician payments above current law** by linking the payment update to the Medicare Economic Index. The Medicare Trustees Report has also indicated that lawmakers should “expect access to Medicare-participating physicians to become a significant issue in the long term” unless Congress takes steps to bolster the payment system.

The Ask

Doctors of optometry urge U.S. House and Senate members to support and advance the **Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act (H.R. 2474)** to bring much needed stability to the Medicare payment system.



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Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act (H.R. 2474) Co-sponsors*

Alabama	Rogers (R), Sewell (D)	Missouri	Cleaver (D), Luetkemeyer (R)
California	Aguilar (D), Barragan (D), Bera (D), Brownley (D), Carbajal (D), Cárdenas (D), Chu (D), Correa (D), Costa (D), Gomez (D), Harder (D), Huffman (D), Kamlager-Dove (D), Levin (D), Lieu (D), Lofgren (D), Mullin (D), Obernolte (R), Panetta (D), Peters (D), Ruiz (D), Sánchez (D), Schiff (D), Valadao (R), Vargas (D)	Nebraska	Bacon (R)
Colorado	Caraveo (D), Lamborn (R), Neguse (D), Pettersen (D)	Nevada	Amodei (R), Horsford (D)
Delaware	Blunt Rochester (D)	New Hampshire	Kuster (D)
District of Columbia	Norton (D)	New Jersey	Gottheimer (D), Kean (R), Norcross (D), Pascrell (D), Smith (R), Van Drew (R)
Florida	Cherfilus-McCormick (D), Dunn (R), Posey (R), Rutherford (R), Soto (D)	New Mexico	Leger Fernandez (D), Stansbury (D), Vasquez (D)
Georgia	Bishop (D), McCormick (R)	New York	Clarke (D), Goldman (D), Higgins (D), Morelle (D), Nadler (D), Torres (D), Williams (R)
Hawaii	Case (D), Tokuda (D)	North Carolina	Davis (D), Nickel (D), Ross (D)
Idaho	Simpson (R)	Ohio	Johnson (R), Sykes (D)
Illinois	Budzinski (D), Casten (D), Davis (D), Jackson (D), Krishnamoorthi (D), Quigley (D), Schakowsky (D), Schneider (D), Sorensen (D)	Oklahoma	Bice (R)
Indiana	Bucshon (R)	Oregon	Chavez-DeRemer (R), Salinas (D)
Iowa	Miller-Meeks (R)	Pennsylvania	Dean (D), Evans (D), Houlahan (D), Meuser (R), Reschenthaler (R), Thompson (R), Wild (D)
Kansas	Mann (R)	Puerto Rico	González-Colón (R)
Kentucky	Barr (R), McGarvey (D)	Rhode Island	Magaziner (D)
Maryland	Harris (R), Ivey (D), Trone (D)	Tennessee	Cohen (D), DesJarlais (R), Fleischmann (R), Green (R)
Massachusetts	Keating (D), Lynch (D), Trahan (D)	Texas	Allred (D), Babin (R), Crockett (D), Cuellar (D), Fletcher (D), Gonzales (R), Gonzalez (D), Gooden (R), Jackson (R), Sessions (R)
Michigan	Kildee (D), Thanedar (D)	U.S. Virgin Islands	Plaskett (D)
Minnesota	Craig (D), Finstad (R), McCollum (D), Phillips (D)	Virginia	McClellan (D), Spanberger (D)
		Washington	DelBene (D), Kilmer (D), Schrier (D)

* As of 4/1/24

May 3, 2023

The Honorable Raul Ruiz, MD
United States House of Representatives
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Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Larry Bucshon, MD
United States House of Representatives
2313 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ami Bera, MD
United States House of Representatives
172 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mariannette Miller-Meeks, MD
United States House of Representatives
1034 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Ruiz, Bucshon, Bera and Miller-Meeks:

On behalf of the undersigned physician and non-physician organizations, representing more than one million clinicians and the patients they serve, thank you for introducing H.R. 2474, the Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act. The legislation applies a permanent inflation-based update to the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) conversion factor, which will provide much-needed stability to the Medicare payment system as our members contend with an increasingly challenging environment providing Medicare beneficiaries with access to timely and quality care.

Congress has taken action to mitigate some of the recent MPFS cuts on a temporary basis, however, reimbursement continues to decline. According to an American Medical Association analysis of Medicare Trustees data, when adjusted for inflation, Medicare payments to clinicians have declined by 26% from 2001-2023¹. The failure of the MPFS to keep pace with the true cost of providing care, combined with year-over-year cuts resulting from the application of budget neutrality, sequestration, and a paucity of available alternative payment model/value-based care models, clearly demonstrates the Medicare payment system is broken. The addition of an inflationary update will provide budgetary stability as clinicians-many of whom are small business owners-contend with a wide range of shifting economic factors, such as increasing administrative burdens, staff salaries, office rent and purchasing of essential technology.

Congress has a unique opportunity to adopt comprehensive, transformative reforms to the Medicare payment system and we applaud your leadership in introducing this legislation. We look forward to working with Congress to ensure passage of H.R. 2474 and continue conversations around further payment reform to ensure America's seniors continue to receive access to the high-quality care they deserve.

Thank you,

¹ <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/medicare-updates-inflation-chart.pdf>; <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/medicare-updates-inflation-chart-cumulative.pdf>

Academy of Neurologic Physical Therapy
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Academy of Orthopaedic Physical Therapy
ADVION (Formerly the National Association for the Support of Long Term Care (NASL))
Alliance for Physical Therapy Quality and Innovation
Alliance for Recovery Care
Alliance of Specialty Medicine
Alliance of Wound Care Stakeholders
Ambulatory Surgery Center Association
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology
American Academy of Audiology
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Ophthalmology
American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery
American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
American Association of Hip & Knee Surgeons
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American Chiropractic Association
American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology
American College of Cardiology
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons
American College of Gastroenterology
American College of Mohs Surgery
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
American College of Osteopathic Internists
American College of Physicians
American College of Radiation Oncology
American College of Radiology
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American Medical Association

American Medical Group Association
American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Optometric Association
American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society
American Osteopathic Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Podiatric Medical Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association Services
American Rhinologic Society
American Society for Dermatologic Surgery Association
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
American Society for Radiation Oncology
American Society for Surgery of the Hand Professional Organization
American Society of Anesthesiologists
American Society of Breast Surgeons
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Society of Colon & Rectal Surgeons
American Society of Diagnostic and Interventional Nephrology
American Society of General Surgeons
American Society of Hand Therapists
American Society of Neuroradiology
American Society of Nuclear Cardiology
American Society of Plastic Surgeons
American Society of Retina Specialists
American Society of Transplant Surgeons
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
American Urogynecologic Society
American Urological Association
Association for Clinical Oncology
Association for Quality Imaging
Association of Black Cardiologists
Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists
Association of Freestanding Radiation Oncology Centers
Association of Pathology Chairs
Association of Women in Rheumatology
CardioVascular Coalition
Clinical Social Work Association
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations
College of American Pathologists
Congress of Neurological Surgeons

Dialysis Vascular Access Coalition
Digestive Health Physicians Association
Emergency Department Practice Management Association
Heart Failure Society of America
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Infusion Providers Alliance
Large Urology Group Practice Association
Medical Group Management Association
National Association of Rehab Providers & Agencies
National Association of Spine Specialists
National Center for Assisted Living
Outpatient Endovascular and Interventional Society
Private Practice Section of the American Physical Therapy Association
Radiology Business Management Association
Renal Physicians Association
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions
Society for Vascular Surgery
Society of Interventional Radiology
Society of NeuroInterventional Surgery
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons
United Specialists for Patient Access
US Oncology Network

CC: The Honorable Charles Schumer, Majority Leader, United States Senate
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader, United States Senate
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Speaker, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries, Minority Leader, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Ron Wyden, Chair, Senate Committee on Finance
The Honorable Mike Crapo, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Finance
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Chair, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
The Honorable Jason Smith, Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means
The Honorable Richie Neal, Ranking Member, House Committee on Ways and Means