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February 15, 2017

The Honorable Raul Ruiz, MD
United States House of Representatives
1319 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Dr. Ruiz:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to express our support for H.R. 849, "Protecting Seniors' Access to Medicare Act of 2017." This bill would repeal the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB).

The IPAB is a panel that puts significant health care payment and policy decisions in the hands of an independent body with far too little accountability. The IPAB's arbitrary annual cost cutting targets would likely lead to short-sighted strategies that will threaten access to care for millions of Medicare patients across the country. Similar to the fatally-flawed SGR formula, which the Congress voted overwhelmingly to repeal in 2015, the IPAB would be another arbitrary and rigid system that relies solely upon payment cuts rather than thoughtful legislative proposals developed through regular order.

Potentially significant changes to the Medicare program should instead be decided by elected officials through the regular legislative process. Eliminating the IPAB will allow physicians and policymakers to focus on long-term efforts to improve care quality, improve health outcomes, and make Medicare more sustainable while preserving access to care for seniors now and in the future.

We strongly support bringing greater cost-efficiency to the Medicare program and continuing to improve the quality of care delivered to Medicare beneficiaries. However, we believe that this can best be achieved by Congress working in a bipartisan manner to establish new payment and delivery models that give physicians the ability to improve patient care and reduce costs to stabilize Medicare for seniors now and in the future.

We thank you for your leadership on this issue and look forward to working with you to repeal IPAB and preserve access for seniors to their physicians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James L. Madara, MD