



JAMES L. MADARA, MD
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CEO

ama-assn.org
t (312) 464-5000

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The Honorable Kathy Castor
U.S. House of Representatives
205 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Castor:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing in support of H.R. 5723, the “Ensuring Access to Primary Care for Women and Children Act.” This legislation would extend Medicaid payment rates under current law for certain primary care and immunization services to at least the level of Medicare through 2016.

Research studies have demonstrated that low Medicaid reimbursement rates can significantly affect a physician’s ability to accept new Medicaid patients into his or her practice. Congress has recognized that low provider participation in Medicaid can negatively affect access to health care, and took action to increase Medicaid payments for certain primary care services to be not less than the Medicare payment rates for 2013 and 2014. These payment increases recognize the value of access to primary care services for Medicaid beneficiaries and the importance of adequate payment to physicians participating in Medicaid.

State interviews conducted in 2012-2013 by the Medicaid and CHIP (Children’s Health Insurance Program) Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC) indicated that several states are unlikely to continue the increased payment if they have to finance it without federal support. In addition, some states voiced concern that if the payment increase is discontinued in 2015, it may negatively impact efforts to recruit physicians to the Medicaid program. The AMA believes that all physicians seeing Medicaid patients should be paid at least the Medicare rate to ensure adequate access to care, and this bill is an important step in that direction.

We applaud you for your leadership in introducing this legislation, and look forward to working with you to move H.R. 5723 through Congress.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD