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January 29, 2015

The Honorable John Cornyn
United States Senate
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cornyn:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to express our strong support for S. 141, the “Protecting Seniors' Access to Medicare Act of 2015.” 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 of individuals with far too little accountability. Major changes in the Medicare program should be decided by elected officials, not some obscure panel with the power to make indiscriminate cuts that adversely affect patient access to health care. Patients and physicians are already struggling with the frequent threat of drastic cuts from the broken SGR Medicare physician payment formula. The IPAB would be another arbitrary and rigid system that relies solely upon payment cuts.

The experience with the SGR also raises concerns about policy decisions based upon projections that require subsequent adjustments to reflect more accurate data. In 2003, Congress had to take action to allow the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to correct \$54 billion in projection errors under the SGR target. The IPAB also imposes a rigid budget target that is prone to “projection errors” that would force Congress to produce billions of dollars in offsets due to inaccurate calculations.

We appreciate the need to reduce the federal budget deficit and control the growth of spending in Medicare. 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.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue. We look forward to working with you to repeal the 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