

August 13, 2014

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
United States Senate
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Brown:

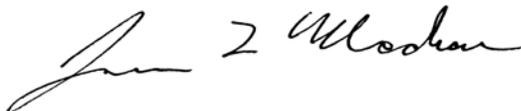
On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing in support of S. 2694, the “Ensuring Access to Primary Care for Women and Children Act.” This legislation would extend the application of the Medicare payment rate floor to primary care services provided by primary care physicians under the Medicaid program beyond 2014, when the enhanced payment rate is scheduled to expire under current law.

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. Current Medicaid payment rates are on average 66 percent of Medicare rates, which is insufficient to ensure access to care for Medicaid patients and adequate payment to physicians providing care to these patients.

The AMA believes that all physicians seeing Medicaid patients should be paid at least the Medicare rate to ensure adequate access. We believe that this bill is an important step in that direction, and applaud you for your leadership in sponsoring this legislation. We look forward to working with you to move this bill through Congress.

Sincerely,



James L. Madara, MD