



January 26, 2010

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Reid

On behalf of the Healthcare Billing and Management Association (HBMA) and the Radiology Business Management Association (RBMA), our members and the thousands of physicians they work with, we are writing to strongly urge Congress to pass a permanent fix to the Sustainable Growth Rate problem.

We understand the purpose behind creating the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) but the fact is that the SGR formula is flawed and as a result has done more harm than good. Each year for the past several years physicians have been faced with the prospect of massive cuts in their Medicare fee-schedule payments unless Congress intervened to prevent those cuts from occurring. While Congress has, in most years, intervened, the magnitude of the cuts has only gotten larger and the anxiety and concern amongst physicians and patients has only been heightened.

We urge the Senate to follow the House's lead and pass legislation to permanently repeal the Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate formula.

As you know, we are currently in the midst of a 60-day reprieve from an unprecedented 21 percent cut in Medicare payment rates that was scheduled to occur on January 1, 2010. This cut – and future SGR related cuts – cannot be allowed to occur. We are fearful that if Congress fails to enact a more permanent fix of the SGR formula, many physicians will simply stop seeing Medicare patients or dramatically reduce the number of patients they will see.

Unfortunately, Congress has fallen into the habit putting off a permanent solution to the SGR problem and instead passed short-term delays on a year-by-year basis adding to the overall cost of fixing the problem. By annually putting off a permanent fix to the SGR formula the cost of doing so is now over two hundred billion dollars, but will only become even more intractable if it is not addressed now. Today, the price tag to permanently repeal the SGR is \$245 billion.

In light of the recent House vote at the end of last year in favor of a permanent fix to the flawed SGR system, there appears to be significant support in Congress to address this issue. We urge the Senate and House to enact legislation that permanently addresses the flawed SGR formula and does so in a fiscally responsible way. Time is running out on

the 60-day reprieve. Congress should not let the reprieve expire and should extend the SGR freeze/delay while working on a permanent fix.

HBMA member companies employ nearly 20,000 people nationwide, and process more than 17 million claims per month, representing more than \$18 billion per year. As the nation's leading 3<sup>rd</sup> party medical billing and practice management Association, HBMA urges you to support passage of legislation to permanently repeal the SGR and enact a new formula that is fair to physicians and patients.

RBMA represents over 2,300 radiology practice managers and other radiology business professionals. In the aggregate, RBMA's influence extends to over 24,000 radiologic technologists and 26,000 administrative staff. RBMA is the leading professional organization for radiology business management, offering quality education, resources and solutions for its members and the healthcare community, and helping shape the profession's future.

Sincerely,

Scott Everson, CHBME  
President  
Healthcare Billing and  
Management Association

Cindy Pittmon, RCC, CHBME  
President  
Radiology Business Management  
Association