



## The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

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March 25, 2015

Speaker John Boehner  
H-232, US Capitol

Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi  
H-204, US Capitol

### RE: H.R. 2 – SUPPORT

Dear Speaker Boehner and Leader Pelosi,

On behalf of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS), we write to encourage Congress to pass the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (H.R. 2) which would permanently repeal the sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula, and enact meaningful Medicare payment reform policy.

Founded in 1964, STS is an international not-for-profit organization representing more than 6,900 cardiothoracic surgeons, researchers, and allied health care professionals in 90 countries who are dedicated to ensuring the best surgical care for patients with diseases of the heart, lungs, and other organs in the chest. The mission of the Society is to enhance the ability of cardiothoracic surgeons to provide the highest quality patient care through education, research, and advocacy.

In addition to eliminating the flawed SGR formula which currently governs physician payments, the bipartisan legislation includes a number of provisions that will help physicians provide high quality and cost effective care to their patients. Included among these are:

- A threshold model of physician performance measurement under the Merit-based Incentive Payment System that allows all providers to be rewarded for high quality care delivered efficiently rather than one that promotes competition and discourages providers from sharing best practices;
- A pathway for the development of specialty-driven alternative payment models that will allow patients and providers alike to benefit from quality and efficiency improvements;
- Positive payment updates for physicians while they work to implement the new payment models and incentives to participate in innovative reforms; and
- Clear guidelines to promote the application of appropriate use criteria and legal protections for providers who engage in quality improvement efforts.

Importantly, the SGR package also includes key language that prevents implementation of a Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) policy that would unbundle 10- and 90-day global surgical payments. Ensuring the continuity of care as provided through services in a global payment setting is critical to improve patient outcomes and reduce health care costs. A full repeal

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of the SGR combined with an elimination of the CMS policy to unbundle global surgical payments allows for the development of alternative payment models, which will drive high quality health care and help Medicare beneficiaries obtain access to the right care at the right time, every time.

Thank you for your continued efforts on behalf of physicians and Medicare beneficiaries. Please know that STS members are reaching out to their representatives in the House and Senate in support of this important legislation. Should you have any questions or if you would like to discuss this issue further, please contact Courtney Yohe, Director of STS Government Relations at 202-787-1222 or by e-mail [cyohe@sts.org](mailto:cyohe@sts.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark S. Allen".

Mark S. Allen, MD  
President