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June 11, 2019

Sent via email

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Committee on Energy & Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Commerce
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Abby Finkenauer
U.S. House of Representatives
124 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Keep Physicians Serving Patients Act of 2019

Dear Chairman Pallone, Representative Walden, and Representative Finkenauer,

On behalf of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS), I am pleased to write in support of the Keep Physicians Serving Patients Act of 2019, which would update Medicare's practice expense and physician work geographic practice cost indexes (GPCI). Founded in 1964, The Society of Thoracic Surgeons is a not-for-profit organization representing more than 7,600 surgeons, researchers, and allied health care professionals worldwide who are dedicated to ensuring the best possible outcomes for surgeries of the heart, lungs, and esophagus, as well as other surgical procedures within 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.

This bill would update Medicare's practice expense and physician GPCI for cardiothoracic surgeons throughout the country. Currently, these indexes are using outdated and inaccurate data that underestimate the cost of medical care in rural and underserved areas. These outdated indexes are likely exacerbating physician shortages in these areas. The Keep Physicians Serving Patients Act would reduce the economic barriers for cardiothoracic surgeons to choose work in rural and underserved areas by setting a GPCI minimum, ensuring physicians are compensated appropriately for vital services. Having a cardiothoracic surgeon at a hospital or facility closer to a patient's home can be the difference between life and death.

STS remains fully committed to improving the quality, safety, and efficiency of care for all patients. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. Please contact Courtney Yohe Savage, STS Director of Government Relations, at cyohe@sts.org or 202-787-1230 should you need additional information or clarification. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Robert S.D. Higgins, MD
President