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Senator Boozman Leads Legislation in Senate to Protect Patients' Access to Surgical Care

Legislation follows letters of support sent by 51 Senators

Companion bill in the House has nearly 100 co-sponsors

WASHINGTON, December 10, 2020 –Senators John Boozman (R-Arkansas), Kevin Cramer (R-North Dakota), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Mississippi), Tom Cotton (R-Arkansas), and Susan Collins (R-Maine) introduced legislation today that will reverse the devastating payment cuts that will further harm the health care system already under strain due to COVID-19.

This legislation will ensure no healthcare professionals receive lower Medicare payments than 2020 levels for the next two calendar years. Stopping these cuts will protect patients by preserving access to quality surgical care and ensuring no physician will face payment cuts amid a historic pandemic.

“Our nation’s physicians are under incredible strain due to COVID-19, and this bill begins to correct a misguided and ill-timed policy that would cut health care spending in the middle of a pandemic,” said David B. Hoyt, MD, FACS, American College of Surgeons Executive Director. “Time is running out to reverse these cuts and protect patients. We thank Sens. Boozman, Cramer, Hyde-Smith, Cotton and Collins for their leadership on this issue and will continue to partner with them and their Congressional colleagues to protect patients’ access to quality surgical care.”

The new legislation in the Senate mirrors H.R. 8702: The Holding Providers Harmless From Medicare Cuts During COVID-19 Act of 2020, which Reps. Ami Bera, M.D. (CA-7) and Larry Bucshon, M.D. (IN-8) introduced in October. That bill currently boasts nearly 100 co-sponsors.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) finalized the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule in early December. The new fee schedule cut Medicare payments to some surgical specialties by up to nine percent. If Congress fails to act, the cuts will take effect on January 1, 2021. Cuts of this extent would be harmful to patients even without the pandemic, but the added pressure of COVID-19 will make it significantly harder for older Americans to access care when they need it and where they need it. A [survey](#) conducted earlier this year found that as a result of the pandemic, one-in-three private practice surgeons may have to shut their practices. An additional survey found that the cuts will force another third of America’s surgeons to reduce their Medicare intake.

“2021 is fast approaching, and time is running out. We need Congress to protect our patients by passing legislation that stops these cuts,” said John A. Wilson, MD, FAANS, FACS, President of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons. “The legislation introduced by Sens. Boozman, Cramer, Hyde-Smith, Cotton, and Collins will preserve patient access to quality care.”

The legislation introduced today follows several letters of support circulated in the House and Senate. Nearly 330 bipartisan members from both the House and Senate have urged policymakers to prevent these cuts.

About the Surgical Care Coalition

The Surgical Care Coalition advocates for access to quality surgical care for all Americans. The Surgical Care Coalition is comprised of 12 surgical professional associations that proudly represent more than 150,000 surgeons working across the country with a common goal of improving the quality of care, and quality of life, for all patients. The founding members have worked together for nearly three decades to promote sound policy solutions to the U.S. Congress and federal regulatory agencies to solve the biggest challenges in health care.