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# Representatives Bera and Bucshon and 6 Lead Co-Sponsors Introduce Legislation to Protect Patients' Access to Surgical Care

## *Bill will stop Medicare cuts to protect patients and physicians amid pandemic*

WASHINGTON, October 30, 2020 – Representatives Ami Bera, MD (CA-7) and Larry Bucshon, MD (IN-8); along with Representatives Brendan Boyle (PA-2); Raul Ruiz, MD (CA-36); Abby Finkenauer (IA-1); George Holding (NC-2); Phil Roe, MD (TN-1); and Roger Marshall, MD (KS-1); introduced legislation today that will protect patients' access to surgical care by stopping cuts to Medicare payments for surgical specialties.

The Holding Providers Harmless From Medicare Cuts During COVID-19 Act of 2020 will prevent the Medicare payment cuts from taking place on January 1, 2021, which will protect patients by preserving their access to quality surgical care and ensure that no physicians will face payment cuts amid a historic pandemic.

"The bill introduced today by Reps. Bera and Bucshon will protect patients by preserving their access to surgical care. We encourage their colleagues in the House to support them and this bill, and by doing so, show they support patients, surgeons, and healthcare workers across this country," said J. Wayne Meredith, MD, FACS, MCCM, President of the American College of Surgeons. "These cuts would be devastating to surgeons and their patients should they go into effect – we thank Reps. Bera and Bucshon for their leadership and action to address this issue."

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) this year announced a new Medicare Physician Fee Schedule, which 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. Another survey found that the cuts will force another third of America's surgeons to reduce their Medicare intake.

The bill introduced today by Reps. Bera and Bucshon and their other lead co-sponsors is a positive step to addressing these cuts. As physicians themselves, Reps. Bera and Bucshon understand the negative effect these cuts will have on patients, their physicians, and their communities. This bill shows their continued commitment to protecting patients in Congress.

"The Surgical Care Coalition and neurosurgeons across the country applaud the bipartisan work by Reps. Bera and Bucshon to ensure patients across the country get the access to the care they need," said John A. Wilson, MD, FAANS, FACS, President of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons. "Amid this pandemic and unprecedented disruption to our healthcare system, these cuts would be harmful to surgeons and their patients. This bill will hold payment levels as they were, ensuring no further cuts - protecting physicians and their patients."

"This bill protects patients and surgeons from the CMS cuts set to take effect in just about two months," said David Glasser, MD, Academy Secretary for Federal Affairs of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. "No patient should have to worry about access to quality surgical care when their sight is at risk, and this bill supports surgeons so they can stand ready to treat their patients."

"The middle of a pandemic is no time to cut Medicare payments, and this bill stops those cuts from taking effect," said Joseph Dearani, MD, President of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons. "Now more than ever, patients and surgeons

need to be able to count on Congress's support, and this bill shows Representatives Bera and Bucshon's support for the care of all patients across the country."

"These cuts will have a detrimental impact on patient care if allowed to go into effect on January 1, 2021. This bill ensures Medicare payment rates remain the same for surgical specialties, and by doing so protects patients' access to surgical care," said Ronald Dalman, MD, DFSVS, President of the Society for Vascular Surgery.

**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.