

November 5, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

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**Federal Affairs Department**

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

I am writing on behalf of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and our 17,000 U.S. members who provide all facets of eye-care, including surgery. We are pleased to join the American College of Surgeons and other specialties in support of your efforts to move forward on health care reform. Specifically, we believe that HR 3961 and HR 3962 will significantly expand coverage for the uninsured and advance a pluralistic coverage system that offers patients choice and access to physicians, both of which are priorities of the Academy. We believe that these two bills are inseparably linked as true health care reform cannot fully be achieved without a solid foundation in the Medicare program.

We appreciate your commitment to a permanent fix for the SGR and positive updates for physicians participating in the Medicare program. This provision will provide a stable environment in which our members can make critical decisions for the future of their practices. In addition, we are pleased with the House decision not to advance an independent Medicare cost control commission, leaving these important decisions to Congress based on recommendations from MedPAC and CMS. We believe that placing important coverage and reimbursement decisions in the hands of an unelected commission with a mandate to cut costs is a bad way to set healthcare policy for the citizens of the US.

We are committed to work with you on reform of physician payment and appreciate your decision to retain PQRI as a voluntary program and include physician access to feedback reports and a timely appeals process. We support a bonus for primary care but agree with you that surgical specialties cannot absorb the cost of this provision. Finally, while the liability reforms are not at the level we seek, we appreciate the House leadership including grants to test alternatives at the state level while protecting current, stronger state laws that include caps and other limitations today.

We appreciate your willingness to accept input from us as the legislation has been drafted in the House and we look forward to working with you as the legislation moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,



Michael Brennan, M.D.  
President  
American Academy of Ophthalmology

