

PRESS RELEASES

Bipartisan Doctors in Congress Announce Legislation to Provide Certainty for Medicare Patients

Legislation to help physicians in rural communities continue services for low-income patients.

Washington, April 6, 2023

WASHINGTON – This week, a bipartisan coalition of doctors in Congress joined forces to introduce H.R. 2474, the *Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act*. The legislation introduced by Representatives Larry Bucshon, M.D. (R-Ind.-08), Raul Ruiz, M.D. (D-Calif.-25), Mariannette Miller-Meeks, M.D. (R-Iowa-01), and Ami Bera, M.D. (D-Calif.-06) would address payment uncertainty affecting Medicare-participating physicians and avoid a possible physician shortage for Medicare beneficiaries. H.R. 2474 would change the physician payment rate above the current law by providing an annual Medicare physician payment update tied to inflation, as measured by the Medicare Economic Index (MEI).

While costs of running medical practices have gone up by 47%, physicians' payments have declined 26% from 2001 to 2023, when adjusted for inflation, making it difficult for small, rural, and low-income serving practices to stay operational.

In recent years, many non-partisan government stakeholders have repeatedly expressed concerns about the failure of Medicare payments to keep pace with the rising costs of running a medical practice and the damaging impact it could have on patient access to care.

The Medicare Trustees and MedPAC have called for legislative action to address the Medicare physician payment system by providing physicians with an annual inflation-based update tied to the Medicare Economic Index (MEI). A March 2023 [report](#) from the Medicare Trustees states that the trustees “expect access to Medicare-participating physicians to become a significant issue in the long term” unless Congress takes steps to bolster the payment system.

“All patients deserve timely access to healthcare from quality physicians in their communities. An inadequate mechanism for determining Medicare reimbursement adjustments is threatening that access and must be addressed. With that goal in mind, I am proud to introduce the *Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act*, which would tie annual Physician Fee Schedule updates to inflationary measurements—a move that is both fair and efficient. I am committed to working in a bipartisan way to obtain a Congressional Budget Office score for this bill and to find options for covering the cost. The current path toward further consolidation, physician burnout, and closure of medical practices must be corrected,” **said Dr. Bucshon.**

“My physician’s heart always puts patients first. It is important to me that they get timely care and see the doctor they need when they need to, especially in medically underserved communities,” **said Dr. Ruiz.** “I am deeply concerned about the impact the outdated Medicare physician payment rate is having on health care access for my

constituents. That is why I am announcing legislation that will move us away from a system where every year seniors' access to care is threatened due to uncertainty over potential cuts. My bipartisan bill, the *Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act*, will bring certainty to America's seniors and improve access to care and health outcomes across the board."

"As hospitals in small and rural areas continue to struggle, it's imperative we take action to ensure these communities have access to timely and quality healthcare services," **said Representative Miller-Meeks, M.D.** "Our bill, the *Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act*, will provide stability for physicians across the board. As a doctor, I understand how important it is to prioritize patients, and I'm proud to join in leading this important bipartisan effort."

"At a time when our health care system is already strained, instability in our Medicare payment system creates further access and workforce issues," **said Representative Ami Bera, former Chief Medical Officer for Sacramento County.** "I'm proud to join my colleagues and fellow doctors in introducing legislation to provide an inflationary update to ensure that we can provide our nation's physicians the stability they need to continue to provide the best possible care for their patients."

Bill text for H.R. 2474 can be found [here](#).

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