

January 20, 2015

Hon. Joe Pitts, Chairman  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
Subcommittee on Health  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Gene Green, Ranking Member  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
Subcommittee on Health  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2415 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pitts and Ranking Member Green:

In anticipation of your January 21-22 hearings titled, “A Permanent Solution to the SGR: The Time is Now,” we write as organizations representing roughly 340,000 Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) in the United States in support of permanent SGR repeal and the Medicare reforms included in HR 4015 considered by the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. Repealing the Medicare sustainable growth rate (SGR) and reforming Medicare Part B payment are long overdue. In the interest of the patients for whom we provide care, we strongly support Congress moving to enact legislation providing permanent SGR repeal and Medicare payment reforms. Payment reforms should recognize APRNs the same as physicians in reimbursement and in the development and implementation of quality measures for payment incentives when the same quality services are provided.

Our APRN Workgroup is comprised of organizations representing Nurse Practitioners (NPs) delivering primary, specialized and community healthcare; Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) who provide the full range of anesthesia services as well as chronic pain management; Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs) expert in primary care, maternal and women’s health; and Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs) offering acute, chronic, specialty and community healthcare services. Totalling roughly 340,000 healthcare professionals, including two of the ten largest categories of Medicare Part B provider specialties according to Medicare claims data, our primary interests are patient wellness and improving patient access to safe and cost-effective healthcare services. In every setting and region, for every population particularly among the rural and medically underserved, America’s growing numbers of highly educated APRNs advance healthcare access and quality improvement in the United States and promote cost-effective healthcare delivery.

APRNs provide crucial care to patients in every environment that healthcare is delivered, contribute to community health and healthcare delivery for populations, and engage in leadership activities necessary to promote patient access to better healthcare and cost savings. The care that our members provide includes services billed directly to Part B, services bundled into hospital or other facility claims, services billed “incident-to” the services of a physician and reported by the physician not the APRN providing the care, and population and community healthcare. **Thus, as Congress works on legislation to repeal the SGR and reform the Medicare payment system, we ask on behalf of the patients for whom we provide care that you keep this in mind: Nurses will always put patients first.**

**APRNs Support Repealing the SGR and Reforming Medicare Payment**

Because Medicare covers APRN services under Part B, we join in expressing support for repeal of Medicare SGR cuts that frequently threaten Medicare beneficiaries, providers and the Medicare program with unsustainable and draconian cuts. Over the next 10 years the Medicare population will increase by 20 million beneficiaries to 72 million. We look forward to continuing work with you to enact legislation that stabilizes Medicare payment and promotes innovations that increase quality and access and help control healthcare cost growth, and to addressing the issues associated with its costs.

In *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* report, the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) first recommendation is for APRNs to practice to the fullest scope of their education and training, and its third is to expand opportunities for RNs and APRNs to develop and exercise leadership in redesigning healthcare in the United States. The IOM recommends policymakers eliminate barriers to the fullest and best use of APRNs, not only so that they can practice to the fullest extent of their license but also to provide for the growing number of Medicare beneficiaries and other patients' access to high quality, cost-effective care. This action is a crucial imperative at every level of healthcare policy from Congress and the Administration, to states, to healthcare facilities and private enterprise, and in every part of our country, particularly rural and medically underserved America which rely heavily on APRN care. Failure to make the highest and best use of APRNs by protecting unnecessary and costly guild-driven barriers to their care denies patient access to quality care, limits healthcare improvement, and wastes taxpayer and private resources.

We hope that the legislative process would support fair consideration and funding of a positive update for fee for service providers. We also request that further consideration of offsetting revenue sources for this legislative package promote sound healthcare policy. We support improvements to the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress legislation that promote patient access to safe, cost-effective healthcare by recognizing APRNs so that they may practice at their full scope and exercise leadership in healthcare transformation – recommendations consistent with the IOM report. Furthermore, we would request lawmakers oppose any amendments that would impair patient access to APRNs practicing to their full scope, and any anesthesia policy related amendments that do not have the support of national organizations representing CRNAs and anesthesiologists.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to continuing to engage with you in support of legislation permanently repealing the cycle of SGR cuts that harm healthcare and reforming Medicare payment to promote access to quality care. If you have any questions, please contact Frank Purcell at the AANA Washington office, 202-484-8400, [fpurcell@aanadc.com](mailto:fpurcell@aanadc.com).

Sincerely,

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

American Association of Nurse Anesthetists

American Association of Nurse Practitioners

American College of Nurse-Midwives

American Nurses Association

Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association

National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists

National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties