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United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the millions of members and supporters of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, I urge you to support the *Medicare Physician Fairness Act* (S. 1776). It is crucial to pass this legislation quickly to ensure that Medicare physician fees will not be cut by 21.5 percent in 2010, a reduction that would make it impossible for many beneficiaries to access the doctors they need.

Unchecked, current law requires additional reductions in Medicare physician fees in future years, a loss which will total to a 40 percent cut by 2016. Over the same period, physician's practice expenses are predicted to rise nearly 20 percent. It is clear that such unrealistic reimbursement rates will cause many physicians to limit the number of new Medicare patients they will accept. We feel, however, that maintaining access to high quality physicians is fundamental to a strong Medicare program.

The National Committee shares the concerns that have been expressed about the impact on the deficit of passing S. 1776 without offsets. However, Congress has repeatedly suspended the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula at the heart of the cuts without providing new funding, relying upon the chance that Congress would allow even higher SGR cuts to proceed in the future to compensate. Few, however, take the resulting artificial baseline seriously. Enactment of S. 1776 will help restore credibility to the budget process and set the stage for realistic health reforms in the future.

Freezing physician rates will allow Congress to work on an effective approach to reducing Medicare cost growth – one that guarantees beneficiary access to medical providers while preserving its fiscal integrity.

I urge you to support the *Medicare Physician Fairness Act* (S. 1776) to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries will continue to have access to the doctors they need. We at the National Committee look forward to working with you to fix this aspect of the Medicare program.

Cordially,

Barbara B. Kennelly  
President and CEO