



THE ALLIANCE FOR PATIENT ACCESS

The Alliance for Patient Access is a national network of physicians who advocate on behalf of patient access to approved therapies. In furtherance its mission, AfPA works to protect the physician-patient relationship and preserve physician clinical decision-making.

AfPA Endorses Repeal of Medicare’s Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB)
Medicare Decisions Accountability Act (H.R. 452) (Sponsor: Roe TN-1)

AfPA supports H.R. 452, the bi-partisan legislation repealing the provision of the The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act that established Medicare’s Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB). This politically appointed board, empowered to cut Medicare payments to physicians, will prove a barrier to access for elderly patients seeking their physicians care. Well-intentioned as it might have been, IPAB is neither a fair nor practical way to cut Medicare spending.

The new health care law requires the IPAB to make recommendations each year for increasingly larger reductions in the Medicare spending rate. As hospitals are exempt from those recommendations for the first five years, only payments to physicians for the care they provide seniors will be subject to the mandated reductions. Those most impacted will be the elderly, as medical practices will likely limit the number of Medicare patients the practice can accept, making it more difficult or impossible for seniors to access care.

The “recommendations” of the IPAB would be beyond challenge. Under current regulations, a patient and their doctor can appeal to Medicare when a recommended test or treatment is denied coverage. It’s a difficult time-consuming process, but it can prove effective. This type of appeal does not exist for the sweeping cuts IPAB is empowered to impose.

Due to similar short-sighted cost-cutting mandates in the past, Medicare is presently legally required to reduce payments to physicians every year. Congress has usually voted to rescind those cuts, but the Board’s cuts would not be subject to cancellation by Congress. As American Medical Association President Cecil Wilson has warned, it would leave doctors subject to two arbitrary sets of annual cuts.

In seeking to contain healthcare costs, solutions must focus on patient wellness and strengthening the physician-patient relationship. The solution will undoubtedly involve some difficult decisions, but those should be made by those accountable to the public, their elected representatives.