

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
233 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell and Speaker Pelosi:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, thank you for your swift efforts to provide relief for the immediate and escalating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. As you move forward with crafting additional relief packages, we urge you to include provisions to fortify the long-term financial stability of physician and non-physician practices across the health care delivery system.

As you are likely aware, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) final Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) rule for CY 2020 included broad changes to reduce administrative burden, improve payment rates, and reflect current clinical practice, especially as it relates to evaluation and management services (E/M). Our organizations appreciate CMS' commitment to reducing physician burden and documentation requirements and support the AMA's purposeful approach to restructuring and revaluing the office-based E/M codes and the concordant planned increases in primary care payments these updates shall provide. However, we are deeply concerned about the sizable cuts this update will impose as a result of the current requirement for budget neutrality upon various sections of the provider community who do not frequently, if ever, bill E/M codes. Notwithstanding the current COVID-19 crisis, many healthcare providers were *already* concerned about the impact of these policy changes on their patients and their practices.

The financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been swift and is already being felt across every sector of the healthcare provider community. Surgical practices are cancelling nearly all elective procedures, many imaging centers are operating at less than half their normal volume, therapy clinics and rehabilitation facilities are struggling to meet short-term obligations, such as payroll and rent, all in an effort to limit the spread of the virus and prepare for the expected patient onslaught. While these sort of changes are undoubtedly necessary, the reduced revenues associated with such changes will likely result in staff furloughs and other residual financial impacts on healthcare practices across the provider community. It has become clear that now is not the time to implement any payment policy changes that will exacerbate the financial instability of healthcare providers' practices. These cataclysmic economic impacts are beyond anyone's ability to predict and will have repercussions for years to come. **Therefore, we respectively urge Congress to waive the budget neutrality requirements stipulated in Section 1848(c)(2) of the Social Security Act for the finalized E/M code proposal for a period of no less than five years. This much-needed action by Congress will provide a critical reprieve for a broad scope of healthcare providers facing substantial payment reductions in the coming months.**

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request. Our organizations and collective memberships, representing over *one million* healthcare providers, remain committed to assisting Congress and the Administration in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic. If you have any questions or comments related to this request, please contact Cynthia Moran (ACR, [cmoran@acr.org](mailto:cmoran@acr.org)) Katie Orrico (AANS, [korrigo@neurosurgery.org](mailto:korrigo@neurosurgery.org)) or Justin Elliott (APTA, [justinelliott@apta.org](mailto:justinelliott@apta.org)).

Respectfully Submitted,

Alliance for Physical Therapy Quality and Innovation  
American Academy of Audiology  
American Academy of Ophthalmology  
American Association of Neurological Surgeons  
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons  
American Chiropractic Association  
American College of Mohs Surgery  
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons  
American College of Radiology  
American College of Surgeons  
American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Physical Therapy Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Society for Dermatologic Surgery  
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery  
American Society of Plastic Surgeons  
American Society of Retina Specialists  
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association  
Association for Quality Imaging  
Clinical Social Work Association  
Congress of Neurological Surgeons  
National Association for the Support of Long Term Care  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of Spine Specialists  
Private Practice Section of the American Physical Therapy Association  
Radiology Business Management Association  
The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
The Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions

cc: The Honorable Charles Schumer  
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
The Honorable Seema Verma