Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, and Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of radiation oncology stakeholder organizations -- including radiation oncologists, medical physicists, medical dosimetrists, radiation oncology administrators and other members of the radiation oncology cancer care team, group practices, hospitals, device manufacturers and more -- we urge Congress to protect patients' access to life-saving cancer care by passing legislation before year-end to prevent significant Medicare payment cuts to radiation therapy services.

On Nov. 1, 2022, Medicare finalized reductions to radiation oncology under the Medicare physician fee schedule (MPFS) for 2023, with radiation oncology facing 4% cuts, among the steepest of any specialty. The cuts stem from a decrease in the Medicare conversion factor, budget neutrality requirements from prior changes to evaluation and management services, and the second year of clinical labor price updates. In addition, radiation oncology also faces additional cuts due to PAYGO and the expiration of the moratorium on the sequester. These cuts add to significant prior cuts to radiation therapy cancer services under the MPFS exceeding 20% over the last 10 years. An analysis by the American Society for Radiation Oncology further reveals 5-year reductions in reimbursement for standard courses of radiation therapy for breast cancer (-18%), prostate cancer (-30%) and lung cancer (-34%).

While reimbursement declines, costs are increasing by as much as 20%, according to radiation oncology practice leaders. Inflationary pressures, staff shortages, and patients requiring more complex radiation treatments, due to delays in diagnosis due to the COVID-19 PHE, have taken the nation’s radiation oncology clinics, which treat more than one million patients with cancer each year, to the breaking point. The radiation oncology community requests immediate relief before year-end, while work begins in earnest on long-term Medicare physician payment reform.

Specifically, in year-end legislation, we respectfully request that Congress mitigate the impact of the clinical labor price update on those services most adversely impacted by the policy. In addition, we urge Congress to provide relief from the conversion factor/budget neutrality cuts and waive PAYGO.
Inaction will threaten access to state-of-the-art cancer care for patients close to their homes, forcing many to travel great distances, at great personal expense, for their daily radiation treatments. The year over year payment cuts are undermining radiation oncology’s status as a high-value, cost-effective cancer treatment for Medicare beneficiaries, with total annual costs far less than those of just a few cancer drugs.

The radiation oncology community stands ready to work with Congress to achieve payment stability and move toward value-based payment in a reformed system. We are grateful for Congress’ longstanding bipartisan support for radiation oncology and cancer patients, and we look forward to working with you to advance these critical cancer policy priorities.

Sincerely,

Accuray
AdvaMed
American Association of Medical Dosimetrists
American Association of Physicists in Medicine
American Brachytherapy Society
American College of Radiology
American Society for Radiation Oncology
American Society of Radiologic Technologists
Association of Community Cancer Centers
Duke University Health System
Elekta
GenesisCare
Isoray
Loyola University Chicago
Medical Group Management Association
Novocure
Providence
RefleXion Medical
Society for Radiation Oncology Administrators
The CyberKnife Coalition (CKC)
The National Association for Proton Therapy
The Radiosurgery Society
The US Oncology Network
Varian, a Siemens Healthineers Company
ViewRay