

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing more than three million businesses and organizations of every size, sector, and region, strongly supports the goal of preventing a significant pay-cut for physicians this year and to improve the Medicare program. While there are a number of Chamber-supported provisions included in S. 3101, the "Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008," the Chamber opposes the significant cuts to the Medicare Advantage program in S. 3101.

Enactment of legislation to incentivize electronic prescribing is a critical and necessary step toward moving the U.S. health care system into the 21st century. The Chamber strongly supports the electronic prescribing provisions because they will bolster utilization of health information technology, prevent medical errors, increase patient safety and provider efficiency, and help control costs that burden consumers and employers.

Nearly 10 million Medicare beneficiaries have chosen to participate in Medicare Advantage plans. These plans offer expanded choice, lower out-of-pocket costs, and improved service to Americans that value a choice in their health care coverage. Many of these beneficiaries have chosen private fee-for-service plans. The Chamber supports beneficiaries' freedom of choice, and the market competition brought about by inclusion of private plans and Medicare Advantage in the Medicare program. Funding for Medicare improvements and increased physician reimbursements should not be provided by cuts to Medicare Advantage. Further, many employers rely on the Medicare Advantage program to be able to provide quality retiree health coverage.

So that Medicare beneficiaries may continue receiving quality care from their choice of providers, physician reimbursement rates must reflect market levels. The Chamber therefore supports canceling scheduled cuts in Medicare reimbursement rates, and providing physicians with an increase, particularly when this increase is coordinated with the development and use of quality and efficiency initiatives. Likewise quality measures must be adequately funded in order to promote quality, cost-effective health care for consumers and employers.

Sincerely,



R. Bruce Josten