



April 29, 2014

The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Blumenauer:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians, I am writing to express our appreciation for your effort to encourage communication between physicians and their patients to develop advance care plans. We continue to support your legislation, H.R. 1173, the Personalize Your Care Act of 2013, which will ensure that the wishes of patients are followed at the end of life.

The ACP is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician group in the United States. ACP members include 137,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students committed to advancing the science and practice of medicine. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.

H.R. 1173 would provide Medicare coverage for voluntary conversations between doctors and patients to create an end of life care plan that advances the needs of the patient. This legislation is consistent with ACP's ethics manual which "encourages physicians to routinely raise advance planning with adult patients with decision making capacity and encourage them to review their values and preferences with their surrogates and family members." As stated in our ethics manual:

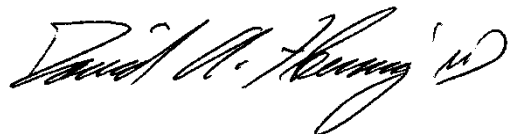
"Advance care planning allows a person with decision-making capacity to develop and indicate preferences for care and choose a surrogate to act on his or her behalf in the event that he or she cannot make health care decisions. It allows the patient's values and circumstances to shape the plan with specific arrangements to ensure implementation of the plan.

Physicians should routinely raise advance planning with adult patients with decision-making capacity and encourage them to review their values and preferences with their surrogates and family members. This is often best done in the outpatient setting before an acute crisis. These discussions let the physician know the patient's views, enable documentation of patient wishes in the medical record, and allow the physician to reassure the patient that he or she is willing to discuss these sensitive issues and will respect patient choices."

H.R. 1173 would authorize Medicare reimbursement for the extended and complex counseling needed to help ensure that *patients' own choices and values are honored and respected* during an advanced stage of illness. The bill does not authorize, nor would professional ethics allow, physicians to pressure patients to accept or reject life-preserving treatment—to the contrary, H.R. 1173 will help ensure that the patient's own preferences are honored, thereby improving end-of-life care.

We appreciate your leadership on this important issue and hope that H.R. 1173 will be passed by Congress and signed into law during the 113th Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David M. Fleming, MD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "D".

David Fleming, MD, FACP
President