

August 4, 1999

The Honorable Fortney Pete Stark
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Stark:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians-American Society of Internal Medicine (ACP-ASIM), the nation's largest medical specialty society, representing over 115,000 physicians who specialize in internal medicine and medical students, thank you for introducing the Medicare Physician Self-Referral Improvement Act of 1999, H.R. 2650. While ACP-ASIM believes the Physician Self-Referral Amendments of 1999, H.R. 2651, would do more to alleviate the problems that physicians face with current Medicare law on physician referrals, your commitment to making improvements in that law is appreciated.

In particular, the College supports the provision in H.R. 2650 that would replace the requirement of "direct supervision" with language that would require physicians to "assume full and direct legal, financial and professional responsibility for the services..." This provision would eliminate the need for physicians to always be physically present while their staff performs laboratory tests. When physicians are required to spend their days supervising the work of their trained technicians, they are hard pressed to find time to see patients and make hospital rounds. This revision would also make it easier for solo practitioners or physicians in small groups to share equipment, rental space and personnel in order to control their overhead costs while providing access to necessary services for their patients.

Thank you again, Congressman Stark, for your dedication to improve Medicare law on physician referrals. ACP-ASIM looks forward to working with you and others in Congress toward this important goal.

Sincerely,

Alan R. Nelson, MD, FACP
Associate Executive Vice President