

July 9, 2009

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman, Ways and Means Committee
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rangel:

On behalf of the over 300,000 physicians and medical students represented by the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), American College of Physicians (ACP), and the American Osteopathic Association (AOA), we are writing to express our broad support for the goals of the Tri-Committee draft health reform bill and to request specifically that the final legislation include, at minimum, a 10 percent increase in bonus payments to primary care physicians.

We commend you for proposing policies that will ensure all Americans have access to affordable health care. Our organizations are especially pleased that you have taken significant steps to re-align workforce and payment policies to reverse the growing shortage of primary care physicians. We remain committed to working with you to advance these goals and ensure that such policies are enacted into law.

As you know, the draft bill proposed a 5 percent increase in Medicare payments for designated services by primary care internists, family physicians and geriatricians. The bonus is 10 percent for those practicing in a designated health professional shortage areas. We very much appreciate the recognition of the need to increase Medicare payments to begin reversing the growing primary care shortage. Increased Medicare payments, when combined with other proposals in the draft bill to fund primary care training program and expand the Patient-Centered Medical Home to a national pilot, would provide a solid foundation on which to rebuild the primary care workforce in the United States.

However, we believe that increasing the amount of the primary care bonus payment is crucial to sending an immediate and powerful signal to medical students, young physicians, and established doctors that Congress recognizes the need for payment policies that support the value and importance of primary care physicians. We strongly support the request from Representatives Allyson Schwartz and Jim McDermott that the primary care bonus payment be increased from 5 percent to 10 percent, and respectfully request that such an increase be included in the final bill language.

American Academy of Family Physicians
American College of Physicians
American Osteopathic Association