

August 31, 1998

The Honorable Ted Stevens
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Stevens:

The American College of Physicians-American Society of Internal Medicine (ACP-ASIM), representing more than 100,000 physician-members who specialize in internal medicine, is concerned with the proposed "user fees" included in President Clinton's FY 1999 budget for the Health Care Financing Administration.

As the Senate Appropriations Committee begins its markup of the Administration's budget, the College urges you to reject user fees, which are nothing more than hidden taxes on physicians and other healthcare providers. The College believes the proposed fees could threaten beneficiary access to health care under Medicare by making it more difficult for physicians who treat older Americans to participate in the Medicare program. Physicians would be discouraged from participating in Medicare because of the \$100 enrollment fee and \$25 re-enrollment fee. Ever-changing Medicare rules make the \$1.00 fee for each unprocessable or duplicate claim highly unfair. Also, financially strained physicians practicing alone or in small groups, particularly those who practice in rural areas, would be unfairly penalized by the \$1.00 fee for each paper claim submitted, simply because they cannot afford to invest in electronic claims processing.

Older Americans and their families depend on physicians to provide quality medical care to elderly patients. The federal government should not expect physicians to fund Medicare operations that are a responsibility of government. The College urges you to do as the House Appropriations Committee has done: oppose the Administration's proposal to impose new taxes on physicians and other providers.

Sincerely,

Harold C. Sox, Jr., MD, FACP
President