



California Medical Association
Physicians dedicated to the health of Californians

October 7, 2011

Congressman Wally Herger
Chairman
Subcommittee on Health
Ways and Means Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Herger:

As the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health develops Medicare recommendations for the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction, the California Medical Association urges you to include authorization for a Medicare private contracting pilot program.

The CMA supports the “Medicare Patient Empowerment Act” (H.R. 1700) introduced by Representative Tom Price, MD (R-GA) which would fully authorize private contracting in the Medicare program. We believe the legislation would help to preserve the physician-patient relationship by allowing seniors to continue to use their Medicare benefit, even with physicians who do not accept Medicare patients. As physicians face an enormous 30% Medicare SGR payment cut on January 1, 2012 that was preceded by a decade of instability and failed attempts by Congress to fix the SGR, it is clear that Congress needs to immediately test and adopt alternatives payment reforms. Otherwise, access to care for California’s seniors will continue to erode. The Medicare private contracting approach would expand access to care without costing the federal government additional resources.

While we support full authorization, we believe that voluntarily testing this approach in certain regions of the country with Medicare’s oversight would provide important information and lay the foundation for more widespread adoption. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'James G. Hinsdale'.

James G. Hinsdale, MD, FACS
President

cc: The Honorable Kevin McCarthy