



News Release

American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery

Working for the Best Ear, Nose, and Throat Care

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For Immediate Release:

April 2, 2008

Ear, Nose, and Throat Doctors Endorse Bill to Halt Dangerous Medicare Cuts to Physician Payments

Alexandria, Va. – To help ensure seniors’ access to Medicare, the American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS) has joined more than 100 national and state medical association in supporting S. 2785, the “Save Medicare Act of 2008,” introduced by Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI).

If enacted into law, S. 2785 would halt the scheduled 10.6 percent cuts to Medicare physician payments scheduled for July 1, 2008, and the 5 percent cut scheduled for January 1, 2009. These cuts would have a devastating impact on efforts to provide seniors and other patients with access to critical care under the Medicare program. By halting these cuts, the bill would provide 18 months of relief for Congress to examine the current Medicare physician payment system thoroughly, in order to develop a replacement system that will benefit both patients and the physicians who provide them with quality healthcare.

If the scheduled cuts are allowed to take place, access to quality healthcare could reach crisis levels nationwide, as some physicians would be forced to limit the number of new Medicare patients they would otherwise treat, delay the purchase of new life-saving technologies, and reduce their staffs to ensure they are able to meet their current payrolls. Seniors and other Medicare patients would bear the burden of having to seek new physicians for treatment, experience delays in scheduling their appointments, and may be forced, in some cases, to travel long distances for care.

The AAO-HNS appreciates Senator Stabenow’s leadership in this effort and urges her colleagues in the Senate to cosponsor S. 2785. Her willingness to step forward with a strong piece of legislation brings hope that the scheduled cuts can be replaced with a fair payment system. The legislation she introduced would not only stave off the impending crisis, but provide time to fix a fatally flawed payment formula.

Reporters seeking additional information should contact Matt Daigle at 1-703-519-1563, or at newsroom@entnet.org.

About the AAO-HNS

The American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery (www.entnet.org), one of the oldest medical associations in the nation, represents more than 12,000 physicians and allied health professionals who specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the ears, nose, throat, and related structures of the head and neck. The Academy serves its members by facilitating the advancement of the science and art of medicine related to otolaryngology and by representing the specialty in governmental and socioeconomic issues. The organization’s mission: “Working for the Best Ear, Nose, and Throat Care.”

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