



July 30, 2009

Sent by the AMCNO to Northern Ohio Congressional Delegates

I am writing to convey the viewpoint of the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio (AMCNO) regarding H.R. 3200, the "America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009."

The AMCNO is of the opinion that there are items contained in H.R. 3200 that are a move in the right direction with regard to achieving wide-ranging health system reform. In particular the AMCNO agrees that the legislation contains items that would be beneficial to physicians practicing in our region. These items include:

- \$228.5 billion to eliminate the accumulated Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) cuts
- \$1.8 billion for medical home pilots
- \$5 billion for the primary care bonus
- \$1.3 billion to extend the floor on Medicare's geographic adjustment factors (GAF) for physician work which would include a review of the accuracy of the GAF relative to the area wage index and geographic practice cost index (GPCI)¹

While there are many other positive aspects to the legislation we were disappointed that it does not contain a provision to implement medical liability reform measures. The AMCNO has been a strong advocate for alternatives to the current tort reform process such as the establishment of health courts or the utilization of mandatory arbitration for adjudication of medical liability cases. In order to achieve comprehensive health system reform this must be adequately addressed.

In addition, there is nothing in the legislation addressing the issue of physician profiling and we believe that this issue should be addressed as well. We also have concerns with the public option included in the plan and we hope that there will be an alternative coverage proposal included in the discussion.

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- ¹ *Realignment of the GPCI formula has been an issue for the AMCNO and the physicians in this region for over a decade. The AMCNO has sent comments to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) regarding the realignment of the GPCI formula for the last two year in response to proposed rules. Studies have been completed by CMS on the GPCI issue but to date no changes to the current formula have been implemented.*

The Voice of Physicians in Northern Ohio

Other items of concern to the AMCNO include how the payment levels will be determined. While we favor the development of the patient centered medical home concept we believe that it will be important that an increase in payments to primary care physicians should not adversely impact payments to specialists. We also question the need to bundle physician fees with hospital fees as well as the proposed restrictions on physician-owned hospitals.

Finally, we agree with other medical associations that have voiced concern with the development of a new Medicare commission which would allow a federal commission to set the size of Medicare payments to doctors, hospitals, and other healthcare providers.

It is clear that H.R. 3200 is an extremely complex bill and there are many facets of the legislation that need to be thoroughly reviewed. We are hopeful that you and the other members of Congress will take the time to hear all sides of the debate and obtain input from as many constituents as possible with regard to this legislation.

The AMCNO commends Congress for their efforts on this critical issue and we will continue to follow the negotiations as the debate on health care reform moves forward in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony E. Bacevice, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Anthony E. Bacevice, Jr., M.D.
President