

The Honorable Bill Nelson  
United States Senate  
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Telephone: (202) 224-5274

The Honorable Mel Martinez  
United States Senate  
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October 25, 2005

Dear Senator Nelson and Senator Martinez:

Physicians are the foundation of Medicare. We participate because we want to provide care to seniors and Floridians with disabilities. Physicians want to keep treating their Medicare patients. We want our patients to have access to high quality care.

However, it is becoming more difficult to deliver care to Medicare patients. For the past 15 years, Medicare physician payment rates have fallen further and further behind the cost of running a medical practice. Physician rates will be cut 26% from 2006-2011, including the 4.4% cut in January in physician reimbursement, which seriously jeopardizes senior citizens' access to quality health care. These cuts would devastate the entire Medicare system.

Additional cuts in Medicare would force physicians to make difficult, heartbreaking decisions about how they practice medicine. Drastic payment cuts — combined with escalating practice costs — could force many physicians to limit or stop taking new Medicare patients, to close some of our offices, and to put off investing in important new technology.

Who suffers the most from any Medicare cuts are Florida's most vulnerable population — our senior citizens and people with disabilities. They simply would not have access to essential health care services. Please do not endanger their health.

Physicians already offset taxpayer dollars by subsidizing care for our Medicare patients. Every time I see a Medicare patient, I actually lose money. Florida physicians lose an average of \$20 to \$35 on every typical office visit.

Plus, Florida physicians lose thousands of dollars a year each in caring for patients on Medicaid. We cannot continue to carry this financial burden unchecked.

Please stop the 4.4% cut that Medicare plans to make on Jan. 1, 2006. Please don't make any additional cuts in physicians' Medicare fees. Don't include physicians in any across-the-board cuts.

We need a long-term solution to this ever-growing problem. Please act swiftly to fix Medicare's unsustainable "sustainable growth rate" formula. Please enact a Medicare funding formula that properly tracks physicians' costs of providing medical care. That way we won't have to go through this terrible battle every year.

Sincerely,