

August 7, 2014

The Honorable Patty Murray
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Murray and Brown:

The Society of Hospital Medicine (SHM) writes to voice support for your introduction of the *Ensuring Access to Primary Care for Women & Children Act*. Significantly lower payment rates in Medicaid create substantial barriers to patient access to primary care services and we wish to convey our appreciation for your leadership in ensuring the Medicaid population continues to have consistent access to the full spectrum of high quality primary care services.

SHM represents the nation's more than 44,000 hospitalists who work predominantly in acute care hospitals, as well as increasingly in post-acute care facilities. They specialize in the delivery of inpatient primary care, which includes a significant number of hospitalized Medicaid patients. Hospitalists are often at the front line of the team of clinicians required to treat many common conditions within the Medicaid population (e.g. asthma, diabetes, heart problems). In addition, for Medicaid patients with severe and complex conditions, hospitalists often provide the first-contact into the comprehensive primary care network this population requires.

This legislation will maintain funding of the Medicaid Primary Care Pay Parity Program under current law. It will ensure that hospitalists practicing in the specialties of family medicine, pediatrics, and internal medicine continue to receive Medicare-level reimbursement rates for providing inpatient primary care services to patients enrolled in Medicaid.

Studies show that access to the full range of primary care is consistently associated with better outcomes and lower costs. Sustaining the increased primary-care payment policy in Medicaid is critical to enhancing this access, including expanding the number of Medicaid patients practices can see.

We greatly appreciate your leadership and commitment to improving access to primary care for the Medicaid population. SHM looks forward to continued work with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Burke T. Kealey, MD, SFHM
President, Society of Hospital Medicine