



What is AAFP's Federal Advocacy Team Working on this Month?

Congressional Action Needed on Medicare Physician Payment

Why it matters:

In July, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released the [2023 Medicare physician fee schedule and Quality Payment Program proposed rule](#). It includes an estimated 4.5% reduction in the Medicare conversion factor – the multiplier CMS uses to calculate payment rates. Coupled with steep increases in practice costs, [this may result in untenable Medicare payment cuts](#) for family physicians in 2023 and jeopardize patients' timely access to essential care.

The AAFP and other health care organizations are [urging Congress to stop forthcoming Medicare payment cuts](#) and enact reform to protect patients' access to high-quality care.

What the AAFP is working on:

- Calling on Congress to avert Medicare Part B payment cuts set to go into effect by increasing the 2023 Medicare conversion factor.
- [Urging Congress to enact positive annual updates for Medicare physician payments](#) to account for increasing practice costs and [address the limitations of Medicare budget-neutrality requirements](#).
- [Supporting legislation to extend the alternative payment model bonus for another five years](#) and to reform the qualifying criteria so that more clinicians can transition into alternative payment models.

Speak Out for members can be accessed [here](#).

Inflation Reduction Act Includes Several Health Care Priorities

Why it matters:

The AAFP applauds Congress for passing and President Biden for signing the Inflation Reduction Act into law. Many of the provisions we advocated for will enable our patients to enroll in comprehensive, affordable health care coverage, lower prescription drug costs, and cap insulin out-of-pocket costs for Medicare beneficiaries as well as [eliminate financial barriers to life-saving vaccines](#).

Primary care physicians play a critical role in educating and counseling patients on vaccines. Family physicians also have strong relationships with their young patients' parents, which is why



we must keep them engaged in their children’s preventive health – especially when it comes to immunizations and back-to-school season, AAFP Board Chair Dr. Ada Stewart [writes in Medical Economics](#).

On August 18, the White House released [state fact sheets](#) that describe how the Inflation Reduction Act lowers health care costs across America.

Ways and Means Committee Advances Prior Authorization Legislation

Why it matters:

The AAFP applauds the House Committee on Ways and Means for advancing the Improving Seniors’ Timely Access to Care Act, which would reduce administrative tasks that interfere with patient care by streamlining prior authorization in Medicare Advantage plans.

[AAFP President Sterling Ransone said](#), “The impacts of prior authorization are jarring: over **90 percent** of physicians report care delays from prior authorization, and more than **80 percent** say it can lead to patients abandoning treatment. Ultimately, this burdensome practice impacts family physicians and the people we need to protect the most—our patients. Amid physician burnout, staffing shortages and the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has never been more critical for Congress to pass legislation to fix prior authorization so physicians can spend more time treating patients and practicing medicine.”

We urge Congress to continue to advance the Improving Seniors’ Timely Access to Care Act and ensure seniors in Medicare Advantage plans have timely, equitable access to care.

Student Debt and the REDI Act

Why it matters:

On August 24th, President Biden announced cancelling up to \$20,000 of student debt for eligible borrowers and extending the current pause on student loans payments through the end of the year. This pause was originally implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and has provided much needed short-term relief, which has been particularly helpful to family physicians who were financially strained by disruptions to their practice.

While the AAFP applauds the Biden administration for extending this critical pause in student loan repayment and partial debt cancellation for eligible borrowers, a long-term solution is needed to comprehensively address the student debt issue, and we have been urging Congress to pass common sense solutions – such as the Resident Education Deferred Interest (REDI) Act (S. 3658/H.R. 4122).



The REDI Act would allow medical students to qualify for interest-free deferment on their student loans while in a residency training program, creating more financial viability for physicians to specialize in family medicine and primary care. Providing interest accrual relief during residency would make opening practices in underserved areas, consider becoming faculty, or entering research more attractive and affordable to residents, as well as address the cost barrier for medical students entering primary care.

What we're working on:

- [AAFP wrote to the Department of Education](#) to call for expanded eligibility for participation in the Public Service Student Loan Forgiveness Program. We also support expanding funding for federal loan forgiveness programs that target family medicine and primary care.
- [We've advocated for Congress to pass the REDI Act](#), which would allow medical students to qualify for interest-free deferment on their student loans while in a residency training program, creating more financial viability for physicians to specialize in family medicine and primary care.

Speak Out for members available [here](#).

AAFP Advocates for COVID-19 Relief Funding

Why it matters:

The AAFP urges Congress to immediately appropriate additional COVID-19 funding to ensure all patients continue to have access to comprehensive care, treatment, testing, and vaccines, and that we are prepared for future variants. Sustained and adequate funding is essential for the federal government and public health agencies to support the country's ongoing efforts to prevent and mitigate the harmful effects of COVID-19 on patients.

Additionally, as kids around the country have already returned or are preparing to head back to school, the need for ensuring the children of our nation are vaccinated, up to date on immunizations and, ultimately, healthy, is more important than ever, [AAFP's president, Dr. Sterling Ransone, writes in U.S. News and World Report](#).

What we're working on:

- [We urge Congress to restore funding for the HRSA COVID-19 Uninsured Program](#), which reimburses physicians and clinicians who render COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccines to uninsured individuals to provide financial stability for safety net practices and ensure access to care for uninsured patients across the country. The Uninsured Program has paid for more than 30,000 COVID-19 tests, treatment for more than 34,000 individuals, and for the administration of more than 18,000 COVID vaccines.



- The AAFP advocates for timely access to vaccines and boosters, but we may not have the supply necessary to provide access for all Americans. Additional funding is needed as future boosters are developed to target new forms of the Omicron variant, as well as developing pan-COVID vaccines to provide protection against a range of variants.
- We also call for relief funding to ensure all populations have access to community-based testing, which is a key step to linking people to treatment and reducing disparities in COVID-19 health outcomes.

For the latest policy updates impacting family medicine, follow us at [@aafp_advocacy](https://twitter.com/aafp_advocacy).