

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
INTELLIGENCE
JOINT ECONOMIC

November 2, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell,

I write today to express my concerns about the looming 8.4% payment cut for 2023 for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Medicare Physician Fee Schedule.¹ I am deeply concerned about the effect these cuts will have on providers' and patients' ability to access health care in New Mexico. I am also particularly concerned about the impact these cuts could have on the 42% of New Mexicans who rely on Medicare to access health care.²

The COVID-19 pandemic has ruthlessly impacted the already severely strained health care system in New Mexico.³ Health care providers in New Mexico are struggling to make ends meet due to higher practice costs and the impacts of COVID-19. The annual Medicare Physician Fee Schedule creates additional uncertainty for providers, and the cuts would make it even more challenging for patients to access care in a timely manner.

I voted in favor of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (P.L. 116-260) in December of 2020, which included a 3.75% payment adjustment for physician services to ensure greater certainty for these providers.⁴ Last year, on December 9, 2021, I was proud to vote in favor of the Protecting Medicare and American Farmers from Sequester Cuts Act (P.L. 117-71), which included a 3% adjustment for Medicare reimbursement cuts for 2022.⁵

Unfortunately, these provisions are set to expire at the end of this calendar year, unless Congress acts.⁶ I am particularly concerned about how these cuts will impact our rural and Tribal communities, who already struggle to access health care without the current cuts being implemented. I am committed to finding long-term solutions to ensure that Medicare is able to meet its commitments to seniors and future generations.

¹ <https://www.cms.gov/medicare/medicare-fee-for-service-payment/physicianfeesched>

² <https://www.kff.org/medicare/state-indicator/total-medicare-beneficiaries/?currentTimeframe=0&selectedRows=%7B%22states%22:%7B%22new-mexico%22:%7B%7D%7D%7D&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

³ <https://nmpoliticalreport.com/2022/02/07/new-mexico-grapples-with-health-care-staffing-shortage/>


⁴ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/133/actions>

⁵ https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_votes/vote1171/vote_117_1_00491.htm

⁶ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/610>

I appreciate your past actions on this issue and look forward to working together to find a solution to ensure that seniors are able to continue to access care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Martin Heinrich", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator