

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 25, 2015

Mr. Andy Slavitt
Acting Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Acting Administrator Slavitt,

We are writing to express our serious concerns regarding the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recent proposal to cut Medicare payments to radiation oncology providers in the physician fee schedule for calendar year 2016. We recognize the valuable role community-based radiation therapy plays in meeting patients' oncology needs and we are concerned that the proposed cuts could further jeopardize patient access to this treatment option.

As you know, radiation oncology is an important cancer treatment option in the battle against cancer, offering patients less invasive care on an outpatient basis that allows many patients to continue living their lives while receiving this treatment. Yet, if CMS' proposed rule is finalized, radiation oncology services would face another three percent overall cut, while freestanding cancer centers would be subject to approximately a six percent payment cut. These cuts could particularly adversely impact patients with prostate and breast cancer because the proposed rule could cut payments for care for these patients by 25 percent and 19 percent, respectively.

The latest proposed cuts follow a disturbing trend of proposed cuts in recent years that has resulted in cumulative payment reductions totaling approximately 20 percent for freestanding cancer centers. We remain not only concerned about the latest proposed cuts to radiation oncology proposed in the 2016 physician fee schedule rule, but also about the repeated proposals in recent years to further cut reimbursement for this care. It is critical that patients' have access to quality and timely cancer care in their communities. Therefore, we look forward to working with you to ensure that community-based radiation oncologists have the payment stability necessary to ensure our constituents have access to the radiation oncology care they need, including continued dialogue regarding potential legislative options that achieve these goals.

We strongly urge CMS to reconsider the proposed cuts to radiation therapy in the 2016 physician fee schedule final rule and look forward to continuing to work with you on behalf of our nation's cancer patients. Thank you in advance for your consideration on these important matters.

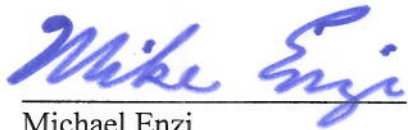
Sincerely,



Richard Burr
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Michael Enzi
United States Senator



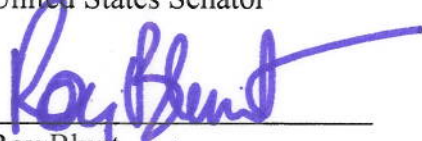
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



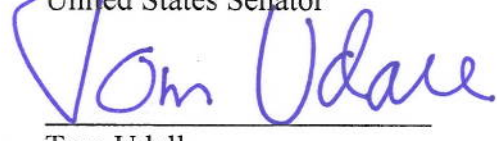
Kelly A. Ayotte
United States Senator



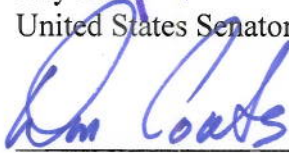
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



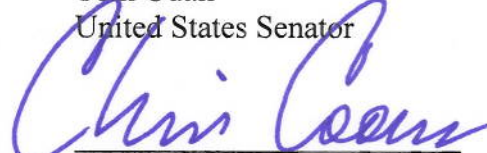
Roy Blunt
United States Senator



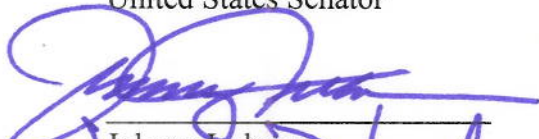
Tom Udall
United States Senator



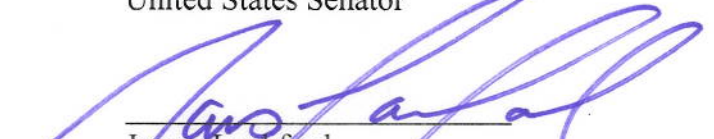
Daniel Coats
United States Senator



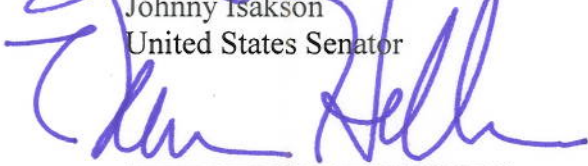
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



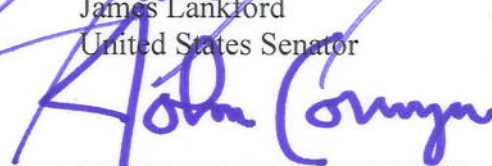
Johnny Isakson
United States Senator



James Lankford
United States Senator



Dean Heller
United States Senator



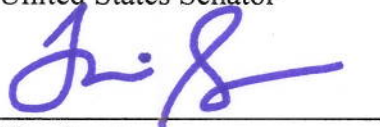
John Cornyn
United States Senator



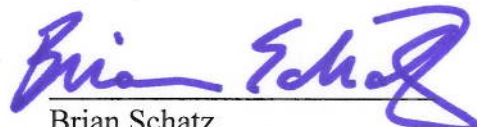
Rob Portman
United States Senator



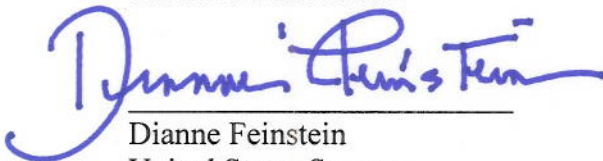
Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator



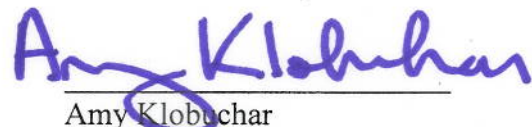
Tim Scott
United States Senator




Brian Schatz
United States Senator



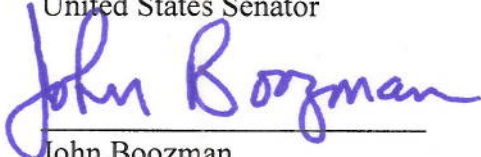
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



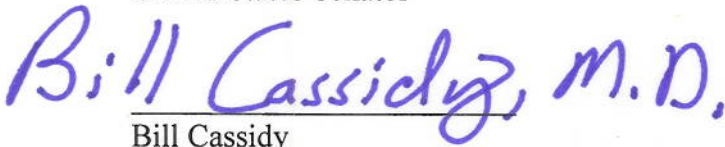
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



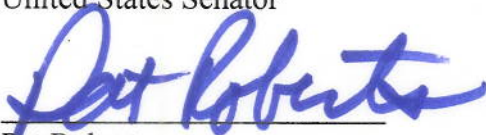
David Vitter
United States Senator



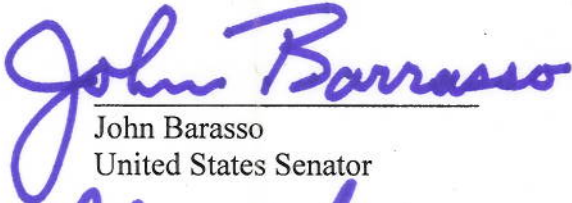
John Boozman
United States Senator



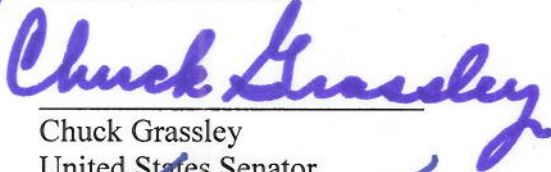
Bill Cassidy
United States Senator



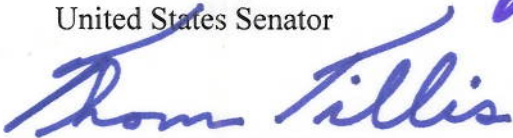
Pat Roberts
United States Senator



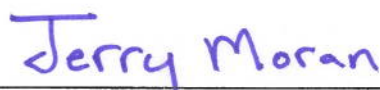
John Barasso
United States Senator



Chuck Grassley
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Jerry Moran
United States Senator



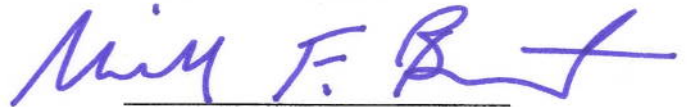
Mike Crapo
United States Senator



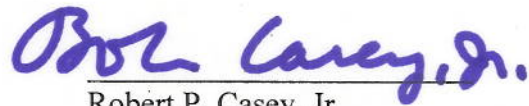
Bill Nelson
United States Senator



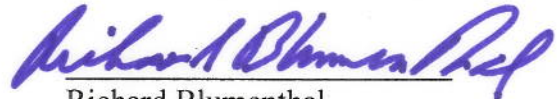
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



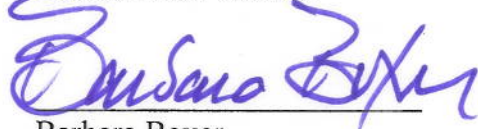
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



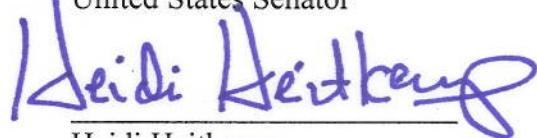
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley

Jeff Merkley
United States Senator