



**AMERICAN SOCIETY
FOR RADIATION ONCOLOGY**

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November 10, 2022

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United State Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

As Congress focuses on year-end legislation, the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) appreciates your leadership and the opportunity to share our priorities as cancer treatment specialists. ASTRO members are medical professionals practicing at hospitals and office-based cancer treatment centers in the United States and around the globe. These teams of radiation oncology physicians, medical physicists, medical dosimetrists, radiation therapists, oncology nurses, nutritionists and social workers treat more than one million patients with cancer each year.

Rising costs due to inflation, staff shortages, delayed cancer screenings leading to more complex treatments, practice consolidation, and added bureaucratic roadblocks are combining with slashed Medicare reimbursements to threaten access to care for cancer patients in every state, particularly those in rural and underserved communities. To provide some stability and relief from these extreme pressures, we respectfully request Congress pass the following priorities for radiation oncology:

- **Prior Authorization Reform.** We applaud the House of Representatives for passing on a bipartisan basis HR.3173, the Improving Seniors Timely Access to Care Act, which streamlines prior authorization requirements under Medicare Advantage plans. The policies included in the legislation are a good first

step toward increasing patient access to care and reducing burden for providers. **With more than 50 cosponsors and growing, we encourage Senate passage of this legislation (S. 3018).**

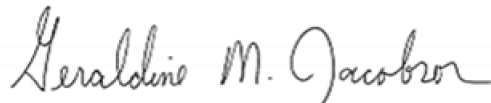
- **Relief from Medicare Reimbursement Cuts.** Radiation oncology is at a breaking point, with office-based clinics at risk of cutting back services and even closure. Radiation oncology is facing more than 10% in Medicare cuts in 2023 due to the reduction in the physician fee schedule conversion factor and budget neutrality, the clinical labor price update, PAYGO and sequester. **We urge Congress to provide relief from the conversion factor/budget neutrality cuts, waive PAYGO, and increase payments for those services most adversely impacted by the clinical labor price update as a start to broader Medicare physician payment reform.**
 - New cuts starting in 2023 will add to what has already been an unsustainable 20% reduction in Medicare payment cuts to radiation oncology over the last 10 years. These repeated payment cuts fail to recognize that radiation oncology is a high-value, cost-effective cancer treatment. Medicare expenditures for radiation oncology services under Medicare Part B are less than the three top chemotherapy drugs, despite more than twice as many beneficiaries being treated with radiation therapy compared to using those drugs. Absent Congressional intervention, steep payment cuts will jeopardize patient access to cancer treatment close to home.

ASTRO is ready to work with Congress to achieve payment stability and reduced bureaucracy in the short term, and higher quality care through alternative payment models in the long term. ASTRO is grateful for Congress' longstanding bipartisan support for radiation oncology, and we look forward to working with you to advance these critical cancer policy priorities. If you have any questions, please contact Dave Adler, ASTRO Vice President of Advocacy at 703-839-7362.

Sincerely,



Laura Thevenot
Chief Executive Officer



Geraldine M. Jacobson, MD, MBA, MPH, FASTRO
Chair, ASTRO Board of Directors