

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
US Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
US Senate
S230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
US House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
US House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Johnson, and Minority Leader Jeffries:

The undersigned organizations – representing radiation oncology physicians, radiation therapy professionals, hospitals and hospital systems, freestanding radiation centers, and other health care professionals and organizations across the country – appreciate Congress’ longstanding bipartisan, bicameral support for radiation oncology and urge passage of new legislation to shift Medicare’s current payment system to a more patient-centered approach that ensures access to high quality radiation therapy services.

Despite concerted bipartisan Congressional efforts, radiation oncology has experienced severe Medicare reimbursement cuts exceeding 20 percent over the last decade. These cuts negatively impact patient care and force patients, including rural and underserved patients, to travel farther from home to receive needed radiation treatments in local freestanding centers and hospitals. People diagnosed with cancer and the radiation oncology teams responsible for their care deserve better. **We urge Congress to pass the bipartisan Radiation Oncology Case Rate (ROCR) Value-Based Payment Program Act (S.4330/H.R.8404), introduced in the Senate by Sen. Thom Tillis (R-N.C.) and cosponsored by Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI), and in the House by Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.), Jimmy Panetta (D-Calif.), John Joyce, MD (R-Pa.) and Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.). This legislation would increase patient access to care, enhance the quality of cancer treatments, reduce disparities for rural and underserved patients, and lower patient costs by saving Medicare approximately \$200 million over 10 years.**

Radiation oncology is a high value, cost-effective cancer treatment. Despite its cost-effectiveness, Medicare has cut radiation oncology payments more than nearly all other physician specialties, which threatens access to state-of-the-art cancer care close to home. The current Medicare fee-for-service payment system is broken beyond repair and is not aligned with clinical guidelines that recommend shorter courses of radiation treatment for some cancers.

Recent data show that more Medicare beneficiaries are seeking radiation therapy, with numbers expected to continue growing and uses for the treatment to increase as the country’s population ages. Simultaneously, radiation oncology practices continue to face rising costs as cutting-edge technology and skilled treatment teams get more expensive. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recognized and attempted to address these unique challenges with a proposed radiation oncology model (RO Model). However, the RO Model failed to achieve value-based care goals due to excessive payment cuts and administrative burdens. We are grateful for Congress’ efforts to fix Medicare’s well-intentioned, but flawed effort to reform radiation oncology payments.

We have learned from the RO Model and are committed to moving forward with value-based payment. If passed, the ROCR Act would:

- Ensure access to technologically advanced cancer treatments close to where patients live.
- Align payment incentives with clinical guidelines by supporting shorter treatments for certain cancers, therefore allowing patients more time to work and spend time with loved ones.
- Remove transportation-related barriers to treatment for rural and underserved patients.
- Improve upon already excellent quality through practice accreditation incentives.
- Provide opportunities for new technologies to be incorporated into the program after 10 years.
- Unify payments across different care settings.
- Update payments for medical inflation on an annual basis.

Radiation therapy is primed to make incredible gains for people with cancer, but the current Medicare payment system is prohibiting the investments necessary to further reduce cancer mortality. We remain committed to payment reform that achieves better outcomes and lower costs for patients.

We appreciate the continued bipartisan Congressional efforts to support fair payment policy for radiation oncology. We urge Congress to usher in a new era of stable payments, higher quality care, lower costs, and reduced disparities by passing the ROCR Act this year.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact Dave Adler, Vice President of Advocacy for American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO), dave.adler@astro.org for more information.

Sincerely,

American Association of Medical Dosimetrists (AAMD)
American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM)
American College of Radiology
American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO)
American Society of Radiologic Technologists
Appalachian Radiation Oncology
Association for Clinical Oncology (ASCO)
BAMF Health (Grand Rapids, MI)
Baptist Health South Florida
Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas
Baylor College Of Medicine
Birmingham Radiological Group
Cancer Care of Hattiesburg, PLLC
Cancer Care Northwest
Carolina Regional Cancer Center
Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
Connecticut Radiation Oncology
Corewell Health
Emory University
Gamma West Cancer Services
Generations Radiotherapy and Oncology PC (Alabaster, AL)

GenesisCare
Hackensack University Medical Center
Johns Hopkins Medicine
Las Vegas Prostate Cancer Center
Loyola Medicine
Maryland Oncology Hematology
Michigan Healthcare Professionals
New York Oncology Hematology
North Cascade Cancer Center, LLC
Northeast Radiation Oncology
Northwestern Medicine - Department of Radiation Oncology
Penn Medicine Department of Radiation Oncology and Proton Therapy
Penn State Health
Prostate Cancer Institute of Arizona
Providence
Radiation Oncology Associates (Augusta, GA)
Radiation Oncology Associates (Daytona Beach, FL)
Radiation Oncology Associates of the National Capital Region
Radiation Oncology Physicians Inc. (Salem, OH)
Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center
SERO (Charlotte, NC)
Society for Radiation Oncology Administrators (SROA)
Sun Nuclear, a Mirion Medical Company
Tennessee Oncology
Texas Radiotherapy
The Radiosurgery Society
Thomas Jefferson University
Trinity Mid-Atlantic
University of Arkansas for Medical Science
University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics
University of Kansas - Department of Radiation Oncology
University of Louisville
UM Radiation Oncology Associates
University of Michigan
University of Rochester Medical Center
US Oncology Network
Washington University Department of Radiation Oncology
Western Radiation Oncology
Willis-Knighton Health System
WVU Cancer Institute at Wheeling Hospital

CC.

The Honorable Ron Wyden
The Honorable Mike Crapo
The Honorable Jason Smith
The Honorable Richard Neal
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
The Honorable Frank Pallone