

September 29, 2004

The Honorable William Frist, MD  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-230 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20510-7010

The Honorable Tom Daschle  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-221 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20510-7020

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert  
United States House of Representatives  
H-232 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6501

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
United States House of Representatives  
H-204 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6537

Dear Congressional Leaders:

We write to you today to draw your attention to a serious situation confronting cancer care in 2005. As you may know, the Medicare Modernization Act (MMA) included changes in reimbursement for cancer care. We support balanced reform of this system, which has long needed repair. However, as constructed today, the policy imposes dramatic cuts that we believe will harm access to cancer care. The overall cut for chemotherapy drugs in 2005 will be about 15% and, for practice expense, a temporary additional payment of 32% will be reduced to 3%. The combined effect of these reductions will reduce resources available for patient services around chemotherapy by 50%.

Cancer centers will experience the impact of this change in several important ways:

First, many institutions have faculty based practices that are reimbursed under this system and will, therefore, experience directly these dramatic cuts.

Second, our clinical trials system is the best in the world and community oncologists and their patients are important participants in our clinical trials. We have heard from many community practices that these changes will force them to reduce or eliminate their participation in clinical trials. Without this support, cancer centers-and the cutting edge research that brings new treatments to bear in this disease-will be seriously jeopardized.

Third, the MMA changes may make it financially infeasible to continue providing chemotherapy in physician offices, where about 80% of all cancer care in the United States is currently delivered. If that occurs, community-based physicians may have no choice but to refer their patients to cancer centers for their chemotherapy. Many of our centers do not have the near term capacity to absorb this sudden influx of patients from other locations. We are concerned about the potential disruption care and access barriers that will certainly arise for our patients.

Studies mandated by Congress to address many of the issues we raise will not be completed until 2006 or later. We ask that you consider postponing these cuts in some way until thorough evaluation of the effects can be conducted.

On behalf of our patients, and the many cancer care professionals we represent, thank you for your careful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Abramson Cancer Center of the University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, PA  
Albert Einstein College of Medicine Comprehensive Cancer Center  
Bronx, NY  
Alvin J. Siteman Cancer Center of Barnes-Jewish Hospital  
St. Louis, MO  
Arkansas Cancer Research Center  
Little Rock, AR  
Association of American Cancer Institutes  
Pittsburgh, PA  
Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute  
Detroit, MI  
Coalition of National Cancer Cooperative Groups  
Philadelphia, PA  
Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center  
Lebanon, NH  
Duke Comprehensive Cancer Center  
Durham, NC  
Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group Foundation  
Philadelphia, PA  
George Washington University Cancer Institute  
Washington, DC  
Indiana University Cancer Center  
Indianapolis, IN  
Kansas Masonic Cancer Research Institute at the University of Kansas Medical Center  
Kansas City, KS  
Lombardi Cancer Center  
Washington, DC  
Mary Babb Randolph Cancer Center  
Morgantown, WV  
Massey Cancer Center  
Richmond, VA  
Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center  
Rochester, MN  
Ohio State Comprehensive Cancer Center  
Columbus, OH  
Oregon Health Sciences University Cancer Institute  
Portland, OR  
Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University  
Chicago, IL  
San Antonio Cancer Institute

San Antonio, TX  
Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins  
Baltimore, MD  
Simmons Cancer Center at UT Southwestern  
Dallas, TX  
Tulane Cancer Center  
New Orleans, LA  
UC Davis Cancer Center  
Sacramento, CA  
UCI Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center  
Orange, CA  
UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center  
Los Angeles, CA  
UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center  
Chapel Hill, NC  
University of Alabama at Birmingham  
Birmingham, AL  
University of Colorado Cancer Center  
Denver, CO  
University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center  
Ann Arbor, MI  
University of New Mexico Cancer Research and Treatment Center  
Albuquerque, NM  
University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute  
Pittsburgh, PA  
University of Wisconsin Comprehensive Cancer Center  
Madison, WI  
USC/Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center  
Los Angeles, CA  
Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center  
Nashville, TN

Cc: Senate Finance Committee  
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
House Ways and Means Committee