November 30, 2017

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

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader, United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer,

On behalf of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), I write to express our deep concern about the sequestration cuts that would be triggered by passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. ASCO’s core mission is to ensure that cancer patients have meaningful access to high quality cancer care and we are concerned the current proposal will bring harm to patients. Specifically, the additional cuts caused by sequestration execution will reduce access to care for cancer patients.

The PAYGO Act requires automatic cuts to mandatory programs if the deficit is increased. The tax reform legislation under consideration will almost certainly trigger these cuts to Medicare. Since sequestration took effect in 2013, oncology practices faced increased challenges leading to closing of smaller practices, consolidation, and loss of access; especially in rural areas. Additional and larger cuts of up to four percent, or $25 billion for Medicare in 2018, will further jeopardize the sustainability of these critical practices harming beneficiaries directly.

Sixty percent of cancer patients are Medicare beneficiaries. A cut of this magnitude will cause increased instability in an already fragile cancer care delivery system and result in decreased access for cancer patients.

We urge the Senate to ensure that mandatory cuts to Medicare or other programs critical to cancer care and research do not result from any legislation before its passage in order to avoid unintended significant harm to patients with cancer.

If you have any questions about this issue, or would like assistance from ASCO on any other issues related to cancer care, please contact Amanda Schwartz at amanda.schwartz@asco.org or 571-483-1647.

Sincerely,

Bruce E. Johnson, MD, FASCO
President, American Society of Clinical Oncology

cc: All Members of the US Senate