



Retired Public Employees of Alaska, APEA/AFT

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November 28, 2022

The Honorable Senator Lisa Murkowski
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Dan Sullivan
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Representative Mary Sattler Peltola
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of Alaska's Congressional Delegation:

I am writing on behalf of the Executive Board of the Retired Public Employees of Alaska (RPEA). The RPEA represents over 4,000 of Alaska's longest serving retired public employees, a group that includes Alaska State employees (including State Troopers); retired school teachers, and University of Alaska employees, administrators, and professors; retired elected officials; and retired judges.

I am writing to seek Alaska's Congressional Delegation's assistance in stopping the variety of draconian Medicare cuts that will take effect January 1, 2023, without Congressional action to thwart the reductions.

As you are no doubt aware, physicians face a 4.5% across-the-board cut to their Medicare reimbursement rates beginning next year, with some medical specialties at risk for additional Medicare reimbursement cuts, as well.

In addition, all Medicare providers face a further 4% reduction in payments if Congress doesn't waive the cuts triggered by the "pay-as-you-go" budget control requirements.

There is also a cut to the 5% bonus presently in place for providers who participate in the Medicare Advanced Alternative Payment models which expires at year-end. Finally, Medicare payments for clinical laboratory tests could face up to a 15% cut.

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The Medical Group Management Association, an industry group, reports that failure to delay these cuts "will be catastrophic." Not surprisingly, more than 500 medical practices across the U.S. reported to the Association that the current Medicare reimbursement rates already "did not adequately cover the cost of providing care." We know Medicare reimbursement rates are already below the cost of care, especially in Alaska with its higher medical costs for many services and treatments.

For many Alaska retirees, it is already extremely difficult to find a primary care doctor who will accept a Medicare patient. These reductions in Medicare reimbursement rates set to take effect in 2023 will not only make finding a primary care physician even more difficult, but it will significantly increase the likelihood that a physician who currently accepts Medicare will cease to do so, meaning more Alaska seniors without a primary care physician.

The loss of a primary care doctor only complicates the health issues facing Alaska's senior population, which, except those of Alaska's youngest children and those individuals experiencing disabilities, is the most vulnerable population in Alaska, and the population with some of the most expensive healthcare needs.

We ask your immediate assistance, here in the waning days of the current Congressional year, to take action to avoid these reductions in Medicare reimbursement. These reductions, if not overturned, will have serious consequences for those Alaskans who rely on Medicare for their daily healthcare needs.

The members of the RPEA served Alaska and its residents for most of their adult lives, and we sincerely seek your assistance in avoiding this potential catastrophic impact on the well-being of this important group of Alaskans, as well as Alaska's senior citizenry in general.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

Randall P. Burns
President
Retired Public Employees of Alaska

cc: Members, RPEA Executive Board
RPEA Membership
Alaska Public Employees Association/AFT