

Opening Statement
Chairman Fred Upton
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health
SGR: Data, Measures and Models; Building a Future Medicare Physician Payment System
February 14, 2013

By now, we are all too familiar with how the current Sustainable Growth Rate system has caused uncertainty among physicians and threatened access to care for our nation's seniors.

Unfortunately, this issue was ignored in the Affordable Care Act, but continuing to ignore it is no longer an option.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to address the American Medical Association. I emphasized our desire to work with physicians and the need for input from the medical profession in order to arrive at a physician payment policy that will achieve real reform.

Real reform will mean that doctors no longer have to wonder whether they will face substantial fee cuts and that our nation's seniors will not have to wonder whether they will be able to see their doctors.

During the 112th Congress, the Energy and Commerce Committee began a bipartisan effort to address this problem that has plagued seniors and their physicians for more than a decade.

In 2011, the Committee sent a bipartisan letter to more than 50 physician organizations and others, soliciting input on how to reform the Medicare physician payment system. More than 30 groups responded to our letter with a number of valuable ideas.

The Health Subcommittee then held hearings to address this issue, and the committee has continued to engage with physicians and other stakeholders to formulate a payment policy to solve this difficult problem.

Last week, Ways and Means Chairman Camp and I, along with Subcommittee Chairmen Pitts and Brady, as well other committee members, announced the release of a proposal to finally achieve long-term reform of the current SGR Medicare physician payment system. This is a top priority. As we move closer to this goal, I am confident that we can make this a bipartisan effort. Today's hearing is another step in that process.

I would like to thank the witnesses for volunteering both their time and expertise today and for helping us as we move toward a solution to this problem.