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March 17, 2008

The Honorable Tom Price, MD, FACS
U.S. House of Representatives
424 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Dr. Price:

On behalf of the 34,000 members of the American College of Cardiology (ACC), I want to express my sincere appreciation for your introduction of H.R. 5445, a bill to prevent scheduled cuts in Medicare physician payments for 18 months. This legislation demonstrates your strong commitment to the physician community and willingness to work toward a positive solution to the ongoing Medicare reimbursement crisis that presents such an immediate threat to physicians and our patients.

As you know, Medicare physician payment rates are scheduled to be reduced by 10.6 percent in July 2008, with an additional 5 percent reduction in January 2009, unless Congress intervenes. Therefore, it is critical that Congress take immediate action to replace the next 18 months of cuts with positive updates and seek to pave the way for a more permanent solution.

H.R. 5445 would offer 18 months of Medicare payment relief providing positive updates through 2009, requiring additional action to stave off significant reimbursement cuts that would take effect in 2010. We look forward to working with you and the Congress to pass similar legislation that also provides a pathway for a permanent replacement of the sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula.

As a physician, you are well aware of the dire need to replace the SGR formula with a payment model that reflects practice costs and promotes quality improvement. Over the years, you have repeatedly demonstrated your keen understanding of the issues facing our health care system. The College views you as a trusted advocate, and applauds your efforts to improve the delivery of quality health care in America. We stand ready to work with you and Congress to advance these goals, now and in the future.

Sincerely,

James T. Dove, MD, FACC
President, American College of Cardiology

