March 25, 2015

The Honorable ___________
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC  20515

Dear Representative ________________:

On behalf of the Council of Academic Family Medicine (CAFM), which includes the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine (STFM), the Association of Departments of Family Medicine (ADFM), the Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors (AFMRD), and the North American Primary Care Research Group (NAPCRG), we write to request your support for the Medicare and Chip Reauthorization Act (HR 2) and the rule for debating the measure when they come to a vote on the House Floor tomorrow.

This bicameral, bipartisan agreement will repeal the flawed Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula and replace it with a more stable physician payment system. In addition, it extends several key programs that help address our nations’ primary care access and workforce needs, including Community Health Centers (CHC), National Health Service Corps (NHSC), and Teaching Health Centers.

Repealing SGR will end a twelve-year struggle that cost Congress nearly $170 billion in short-term patches and implements Medicare physician payment reforms that will facilitate expanded access, innovation and quality improvements. There is no better time than now to remove the continued need for costly “doc fixes.”

We also strongly support the two-year extensions of the Community Health Center, National Health Service Corps (NHSC) and Teacher Health Center (THC) programs, which together face a primary care cliff, or elimination of authority and/or funding at the end of this fiscal year, if not extended. Each of these programs aids in increased access to appropriate health care for our vulnerable populations. NHSC and THC graduate medical education programs are an appropriate investment in a primary care workforce. Community-based THCs are primary care training programs committed to preparing physicians to meet communities’ health needs. By moving training into the community, THCs are on the leading edge of innovative educational programming dedicated to ensuring a sufficient supply of primary care physicians. Investment in these innovative training programs will lead to a better distribution of family physicians in rural and underserved communities across the country.

We urge your support of the Medicare and Chip Reauthorization Act (HR 2) as an opportunity to move our nation’s health care delivery system forward in addressing lack of
access to high quality care for our poor and vulnerable populations, in paying for the quality of the care rather than just the volume of services provided, and in investing in an appropriate workforce able to provide that care.

Thank you for your consideration of our request and if you have any questions about these issues, please feel free to contact Hope Wittenberg, CAFM’s Director of Government Relations at 202-986-3309 or by e-mail at hwittenberg@stfm.org.

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