

Hill Day Issue Overview: *Potential Questions*

Mitigating Medicare Physician Payment Cuts

- Why are physicians seeking payment “relief” beyond 2021?
 - Physician practices saw significant disruptions throughout 2020 and the speed and volume by which patients are now seeking care inconsistent across the nation. Provider offices are also continuing to adjust their practice patterns, etc., to accommodate the COVID-19 mitigation recommendations which can impact office hours based on cleaning, adjusted patient check-in protocols and other necessary changes. Ultimately, the “new normal” is still being established and physician practices are ill-equipped to absorb payment reductions.
- Does another year of this sort of payment adjustment establish precedent for another SGR-like mechanism?
 - No one wants another SGR, but physician practices do need financial stability. The provision of an additional \$3B for the fee schedule will protect physicians from significant payment reductions in 2022 and provide additional time for Congress to evaluate potential longer-term solutions associated with Medicare physician pay.

Proposed Amendments to the Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014

- Why has implementation been delayed for so long?
 - CMS has had difficulty operationalizing the “real-time” claims processing requirements in the existing statute. The proposed changes to the PAMA AUC program would alleviate this issue without undermining the purpose of the program.
- Who may be opposed to these changes?
 - Since its inception, a handful of organizations have argued that the original bill/law was too cumbersome and would add to the physician workload. We believe implementation of the PAMA AUC program, with the requisite updates, is the best approach for ensuring patients receive the right imaging study at the right time. It is also a critical utilization control and a viable alternative to comprehensive prior authorization requirements.

Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act (S. 610/H.R. 1667)

- How much will this bill cost?
 - The specific funding amounts are included in the respective sections of the bill. Fortunately, Congress has already appropriated the funds associated with the bill as part of the American Rescue Plan (HR 1319/PL 117-2).
 - The authorizing language included in S. 610/H.R. 1667 will help ensure HRSA and CDC are able to implement the requisite programs.