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November 5, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi Speaker U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker:

On behalf of the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS), an international, educational, and scientific organization whose nearly 10,000 member ophthalmologists specialize in cataract and refractive surgery, I want to express our thanks for your leadership in advancing a health system reform proposal that includes comprehensive Medicare payment reform that provides fair and equitable reimbursement and ensures continued access to specialty care. We, therefore, offer our support for H.R. 3961, the Affordable Health Care for America Act and H.R. 3961, the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act. We believe that meaningful health care reform cannot be achieved without a stable Medicare reimbursement system to assure Medicare beneficiary access to high quality care. We appreciate your commitment to the concurrent advancement of H.R. 3961 and H.R.3962.

We also appreciate the willingness of you and your staff to understand the Medicare reimbursement issues facing our membership. We commend you for your commitment to the enactment of legislation that repeals the flawed Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula and prevents the 21% reduction in physician payments scheduled to take effect in 2010, eliminates the debt that has accumulated as a result of the SGR and previous short term fixes, and replaces the SGR with a more stable payment system.

In addition, we support the legislation's long term goals of the expansion and continuation of patient access to quality care. ASCRS has been actively engaged in the process of developing evidence-based and clinically relevant quality measures, as well as establishing a data registry. Our commitment is to provide the highest quality specialty care to our Medicare beneficiaries in a transparent health care system. Therefore, we appreciate your efforts to further improve and refine the Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI) by including changes to the PQRI that would allow physicians to access their data in a timely manner, provide physicians with a reasonable appeals process, and ensure that the PQRI is not punitive.

We are pleased that H.R. 3962 does not contain the establishment of an independent unelected commission whose recommendations on Medicare payment and coverage would become law without congressional action, and a reduction in Medicare payments for all other physicians to fund the primary care bonus.

Once again, we appreciate your commitment, and your willingness to work with the physician community. ASCRS is committed to strengthening America's health care system and ensuring continued access to quality health care for our patients.

Sincerely,

[Handwritten signature of Alan S. Crandall]

Alan S. Crandall, MD