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COALITION SPOKESMAN TELLS CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS THAT NEW MEDICARE LEGISLATION WILL EMPOWER AMERICAN SENIORS WITH PHYSICIAN CHOICE

ATLANTA – M. Todd Williamson, M.D., a former president of the Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) and the spokesman for the Coalition of State Medical and National Specialty Societies, told members of the U.S. House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee Health Subcommittee today that lawmakers should support the Medicare Patient Empowerment Act (H.R. 1700) that was just introduced by MAG member Rep. Tom Price, M.D., to ensure that American seniors can use their Medicare benefit to see the physicians of their choice.

“Our Coalition supports the Medicare Patient Empowerment Act as an important part of any Medicare reform,” Dr. Williamson stated. “This legislation would establish a new Medicare payment option whereby patients and physicians would be free to contract for medical care without penalty.”

The Lawrenceville-based neurologist explained that H.R. 1700 would allow seniors to apply their Medicare benefits to the physician of their choice and to contract for any amount not covered by Medicare. He stressed that this would be a purely voluntary agreement between a patient and their physician.

“The Coalition is convinced that the key to preserving our Medicare patients’ access to quality medical care is overhauling the flawed Medicare payment system,” Dr. Williamson said. “Medicare is the nation’s largest government-run health care program, and it represents the most glaring example of the need for change.” He also pointed out that as the gap between government-controlled payment rates and the cost of running a practice grows wider, physicians are finding it increasingly difficult to accept Medicare patients.

Dr. Williamson told the subcommittee – which includes MAG member and Georgia Rep. Phil Gingrey, M.D. – that the government has the right to determine what it will pay toward medical care, but it doesn’t have the right to determine the value of that medical care. “This value determination should ultimately be made by the individual patient,” he pronounced.

Dr. Williamson concluded that, “The day the Medicare Patient Empowerment Act becomes law, every physician will become accessible to every Medicare patient. Private contracting is the only sustainable, patient-centered solution for the medical payment system that will ensure our patients have access to the medical care they need.”

The Coalition of State Medical and National Specialty Societies is made up of 16 member groups that represent some 90,000 physicians. With some 6,000 members, MAG is the leading voice for the medical profession in Georgia. Go to www.mag.org for more information.

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