PHYSICIANS ADVOCACY INSTITUTE STATEMENT ON SURPRISE MEDICAL BILLS LEGISLATION IN CONGRESS

Robert W. Seligson, president of the Physicians Advocacy Institute (PAI), made the following statement about the House Ways and Means Committee’s legislation:

“Physicians are encouraged by the positive momentum building for meaningful action on surprise medical bills. We appreciate the leadership shown by members of the House Ways and Means Committee to support an independent process to resolve payment disputes, which will protect patients’ ability to receive necessary medical care. As a final bill begins to take shape, it’s important that the mediation process treat physicians and insurers on a level playing field.

“Relying on the private market and a mediation backstop to solve disputes is the best way to hold patients harmless without jeopardizing access to medical care, especially in an emergency. The Committee’s approach would be strengthened by ensuring that mediation takes a range of meaningful physician data into account, which should be provided by an independent data collection entity to ensure fairness and avoid unintended consequences for physicians. Using insurers’ “median in-network” payment data to resolve disputes would undermine patients’ access to important medical care. As the Congressional Budget Office recognized, this will give insurers unrestrained marketplace clout and drive in-network rates down artificially, sometimes below the cost of medical services.

“Legislation must also address the limited provider networks that created America’s surprise medical bills epidemic. Insurers should be required to maintain robust networks, or the trend toward out-of-network services that force patients to pay more will continue to accelerate. This particularly hurts people with high-deductible health plans or limited out-of-network coverage.

“Like Congress, physicians believe the time to end patients’ responsibility for surprise medical bills is now. We look forward to continuing to work together to pass legislation that protects patients and ensures disputes are resolved fairly without making it more difficult to access critical care in an emergency.”

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The Physicians Advocacy Institute, Inc. (PAI) is a not-for-profit 501(c)(6) advocacy organization established in 2006 whose mission is to advance fair and transparent payment policies in order to sustain the profession of medicine for the benefit of patients.