



Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society

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August 20, 2009

Name
Address
CSZ

Dear Congress Member:

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society's more than 900 members, I am writing to express our concerns with the pending national healthcare reform effort. In general, we believe that affordable healthcare insurance coverage for citizens is an important goal, but the current proposals contain provisions that cause the Society's members great concern regarding continued optimum treatment for Pennsylvanians requiring musculoskeletal care.

The Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society (POS) has long sought to reform Pennsylvania's healthcare payment system. The Commonwealth's healthcare insurance market is dominated by regional monopolies that limit patient access to care and treat physicians merely as high cost providers from whom reimbursement should be restricted. This market does not serve the best interests of patients or physicians and reform is decidedly needed.

Over the years, POS has fought the dominant Blue plans on various fronts. First, POS initiated a class action lawsuit to force Independence Blue Cross (IBC) to disclose their reimbursement methodologies as a means for physicians to negotiate reimbursements rates on a more even playing field. Second, the POS vigorously opposed the proposed Highmark/IBC merger because such a merger would have led to further consolidation in a market that already lacks true competition. Both actions were successful.

In addition, during the current and immediate past sessions of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, the POS advocated for expanded healthcare insurance coverage for Pennsylvania's citizens. These actions were based in the understanding that, in our current healthcare market, patients need healthcare insurance to access high quality care.

Our Society is well aware of the need for reform and we have acted on the state level. As POS engages in the national healthcare debate, we want the Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation to be mindful of the needs of our patients and practices and to be deliberate in your

consideration of the various proposals before the Congress. In healthcare reform, speed is not of the essence – doing it right the first time is of the essence.

To that end, the POS Board of Directors has adopted the following principles to guide our Society's advocacy on national healthcare reform. Our state concerns mirror those of our national society, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) and include the right of patients to choose their doctors and to have direct access to specialty care as well as medical liability reform. You may have already received a communication from the AAOS detailing most of these principles. Soon you will receive a communication from a constituent surgeon who will further express the POS's concerns.

In addition, the POS Board of Directors has determined that we will oppose HR 3200 in its present form. While this legislation contains some positive provisions, overall the legislation does not conform to the threshold issues represented by our principles.

Thank you for the opportunity to express the Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society's concerns. We look forward to working with you on this important reform effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gerald Williams".

Gerald R. Williams Jr., MD
President