

October 26, 2023

The Honorable Melanie Stansbury
United States House of Representatives
1421 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael Burgess
United States House of Representatives
2161 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Stansbury and Representative Burgess,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our strong support for the SURS Extension Act. This legislation renews an important technical assistance program known as the Quality Payment Program Small Underserved, and Rural Support (QPP-SURS) program, which provided support to practices who participate in Medicare value-based payment initiatives, and we strongly urge its swift passage by Congress.

As you know, the widely bipartisan Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA) established the Quality Payment Program and the QPP-SURS program, which provided direct assistance to eligible clinicians required to participate in the Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS). This assistance is critical to ensure that small practices in rural and underserved areas have the support and tools necessary to succeed in the MIPS program. However, after five years of support, QPP-SURS ended on February 15, 2022, leaving clinicians without a direct technical assistance program to help them navigate continuously changing regulations in the remaining years and increasing performance thresholds of the QPP. Removing this critical infrastructure support further exacerbates disparities in communities already facing limited access to high-quality health care.

Additionally, payment reform programs are complex, and clinicians require supplemental resources and guidance to meet the substantial quality and cost containment aspirations of payment models. This is particularly true for small practices that qualify for QPP-SURS. Practices that fail to meet the MIPS performance threshold could be penalized up to nine percent for poor performance, which is a significant financial impact for providers that often serve high-need, high-cost patients in underserved areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated this issue by restricting the availability of these clinicians to understand updates and changes to payment reform programs.

The SURS Extension Act renews the QPP-SURS program until 2029 and ensures that small practices in rural and underserved areas have the support and tools necessary to succeed in the MIPS program.

Recognizing the success of the program, we also encourage Congress to consider expanding technical assistance opportunities in the spirit of QPP-SURS. This can be achieved through modest changes in the legislation, and we urge Congress to do so in a bipartisan way as the bill makes its way through the legislative process.

Once again, thank you for your leadership in supporting small medical practices across the United States. We look forward to working with you to ensure the passage of this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)
American Academy of Home Care Medicine (AAHCM)
American College of Physicians (ACP)
American Medical Association (AMA)

American Osteopathic Association (AOA)
Altarum
Civitas Networks for Health
Comagine Health
Medical Group Management Association (MGMA)
Mountain Pacific Quality Health
Primary Care Collaborative
Stratis Health
TMF Health Quality Institute
Vermont Medical Society