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March 1, 2017

The Honorable Sherrod Brown  
The Honorable Roger Wicker  
The Honorable Ben Cardin  
The Honorable Susan Collins  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Brown, Wicker, Cardin and Collins,

On behalf of the 1,500 physician members of the Digestive Health Physicians Association (DHPA®), we would like to offer our strong support for your legislation, *The Removing Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening Act (S. 479)*, which will help prevent colorectal cancer in the Medicare population.

With two-thirds of colorectal cancers occurring in Medicare-aged individuals, our physician members strongly support your legislation to eliminate cost-sharing under Medicare for preventive screening colonoscopies, including when potentially dangerous polyp tissue is removed. Colonoscopies are among the most effective cancer-preventing tools in modern medicine, as the procedure can simultaneously diagnose and remove precancerous tissue. When detected early, the survival rate for colon cancer is 90%. Yet, under current guidelines, 23 million people still have not been screened and too many face unexpected financial burdens associated with colon cancer screenings. Your legislation will save lives while also saving money for both Medicare beneficiaries and the Medicare program.

The DHPA is a professional association comprised of 65 independent gastroenterology practices in 31 states, which provide high-quality and cost-efficient integrated care in the independent practice setting. Over the last year, our physician members treated approximately two and a half million patients in more than four million patient encounters.

DHPA is committed to improving healthcare outcomes for our patients. Early detection and prevention of colon cancer are critical components of that mission. DHPA supports the advanced APM proposal submitted by the Digestive Health Network, Inc., pending before the Physician-Focused Payment Model Technical Advisory Committee (PTAC). This proposal incorporates a comprehensive, prospective bundled payment with retrospective reconciliation designed to encourage practitioners from multiple specialties to collaborate and

coordinate care to more effectively manage patients who require colonoscopy for colorectal cancer screening, diagnosis, and surveillance. Much like your legislation, this advanced APM will help to increase colonoscopies for colorectal cancer screenings, improve early detection and survival rates for this disease, and reduce barriers for beneficiaries when a screening becomes a diagnostic or therapeutic procedure.

DHPA will continue to look for opportunities to provide high quality, cost efficient healthcare to our patients and are grateful for your leadership in helping break down the barriers that exist for many of our patients. DHPA applauds you for your leadership in sponsoring S. 479, *The Removing Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening Act*, and looks forward to working with you to ensure its success.

Sincerely,



Fred Rosenberg, M.D.  
President



Lawrence Kim, M.D.  
Chair, Health Policy

cc: Kevin Harlen, Executive Director, DHPA