



For Immediate Release

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AMA TO CONGRESS: DON'T CUT MEDICARE TO FUND FARM BILL
Sneak Attack On Specialty Hospitals In Farm Bill Will Hurt Patients

Statement Attributable to: William G. Plested III, M.D.
AMA Immediate Past-President

“While it’s unusual to think of farmers and hospitals together, the farm bill conference report has thrown them together at the expense of America’s patients. Opponents of physician-owned specialty hospitals are trying to slip a provision to ban specialty hospitals into the farm bill conference report, well after the bill has been passed by both the House and Senate.

“Specialty hospitals are an innovative way to provide patients with high-quality care, and patients consistently report high satisfaction with the care provided at these hospitals. In addition to providing high quality patient care, a congressionally-mandated study found that specialty hospitals provide more net community benefits through uncompensated care and taxes than not-for-profit competitors as a share of total revenues.

“As we work to improve the health care system, it is bad policy to take away patients’ health care choices by banning specialty hospitals – especially under the cover of the farm bill. This is a sneak attack by general hospitals attempting to eliminate competition, and it is wrong to insert unrelated health care provisions into the farm bill that were not part of the House and Senate floor action.

“The AMA and other supporters of specialty hospitals are ready and willing to discuss the merits of these hospitals, but its opponents are resorting to smoke and mirrors to state their case. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) recently rebuked the American Hospital Association and others in a letter for misrepresenting the findings of an HHS study on specialty hospitals.

“Access to care for Medicare patients is already at risk because of looming Medicare physician payment cuts. Taking away a venue in which patients receive high quality care is antithetical to the goal of improving seniors’ access to care. Keep the farm bill for the farmers – and let’s have an open discussion about access to health care and the importance of specialty hospitals in the light of day.”

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