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Sen. Brown helps to protect access to cancer care

Joins almost 100 colleagues in asking Medicare to stop proposed cuts to radiation therapy

Fairfax, Va., September 17, 2012 – The American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) applauds the work of Sen. Scott Brown (R-Mass.) for leading efforts to protect access to cancer care.

Sen. Brown has committed to join a bipartisan group of nearly 20 Senate colleagues in sending a letter to the U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius protesting Medicare’s proposal to cut radiation oncology payments by 15 percent overall and 19 percent to community-based cancer centers. A July 2012 survey of ASTRO members concluded that cuts of this magnitude could have devastating effects on cancer centers in Massachusetts and nationwide, with freestanding and community-based centers being hit the hardest. Medicare cuts could force many centers to close, consolidate or reduce services to cancer patients.

“Sen. Brown recognizes the far-reaching effects of Medicare’s proposal on cancer patients and their families,” said Laura I. Thevenot, chief executive officer of ASTRO. “Access to high-quality cancer care is essential to improving treatment success and patient survival. Radiation oncologists and their patients greatly appreciate the commitment and leadership of Sen. Brown and colleagues to protect cancer care.”

Advancing technology and improved techniques have allowed radiation oncologists to significantly improve and provide targeted radiation treatment that effectively kills cancer cells while protecting healthy tissue and organs. These advancements have improved outcomes and decreased painful effects, allowing patients to not only survive but thrive after their cancer treatments.

A similar letter is currently circulating the House of Representatives where more than 75 Representatives have signed on so far. The two letters combined will send a message to Secretary Sebelius that Medicare cuts of this magnitude are not what America’s cancer patients deserve.

For more information or detailed results of ASTRO’s member survey, contact Michelle Kirkwood, 703-286-1600, press@astro.org.

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ASTRO is the largest radiation oncology society in the world, with more than 10,000 members who specialize in treating patients with radiation therapies. As the leading organization in radiation oncology, biology and physics, the Society is dedicated to improving patient care through education, clinical practice, advancement of science and advocacy. For more information on radiation therapy, visit www.ranswers.org. To learn more about ASTRO, visit www.astro.org.

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