

UPDATE



neurosurgery

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Neurosurgeons Endorse Legislation to Avoid Steep Medicare Cuts in 2021

Action is necessary this year to prevent these harmful cuts and preserve timely access to care.

Washington, DC—Today, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) announced their [endorsement](#) of the “Holding Providers Harmless From Medicare Cuts During COVID-19 Act.” The [legislation](#) is sponsored by Reps. **Ami Bera**, MD, (D-Calif.); **Larry Bucshon**, MD, (R-Ind.); **Brendan Boyle** (D-Pa.); **George Holding** (R-N.C.); **Raul Ruiz**, MD, (D-Calif.); **Phil Roe**, MD, (R-Tenn.); **Abby Finkenauer** (D-Iowa); and **Roger Marshall**, MD, (R-Kan.). If adopted, it would ensure that physicians are held harmless from steep Medicare payment cuts in 2021 and 2022.

Neurosurgeons face overall payment cuts of at least 7% at a time when the nation’s health care system is already stressed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The reductions are primarily driven by new Medicare payment policies for office and outpatient visits that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will implement on Jan. 1, 2021. Drastic cuts caused by changes to these visit codes — also known as evaluation and management (E/M) codes — will undermine patient access to neurosurgical care. More than 260 members of the U.S. House of Representatives have recently gone on record against these cuts.

“We thank Reps. Bera, Bucshon and the other original cosponsors for their leadership in moving forward legislation to prevent these damaging cuts,” said **Ann R. Stroink**, MD, FAANS, a practicing neurosurgeon from Bloomington, Illinois, and chair of the AANS/CNS Washington Committee.

As founding members of the [Surgical Care Coalition](#), the AANS and CNS are working to stop these planned Medicare payment cuts. A recent survey conducted by the coalition found that neurosurgical practices face severe financial distress due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Even before the CMS cuts take effect, the survey found that:

- More than one-half (54%) of respondents are concerned that they could be forced to shut down their practice, limiting choice and access to neurosurgical care;
- Three-quarters (74%) of neurosurgeons are concerned about the finances of their practice, and to keep the doors open, 38% have cut their own salary, and one-quarter (24%) have taken on debt as a result of COVID-19; and
- In the face of declining revenues, 86% of respondents are worried that they will have to cut employee’s salaries and 76% fear that they may have to permanently layoff employees.

“With overwhelming bipartisan support for action before the end of the year, America’s neurosurgeons are encouraged that Congress recognizes that cuts of the magnitude proposed by CMS could result in physicians taking fewer Medicare patients leading to longer wait times and reduced access to care for older Americans. Congress must not let this happen,” Dr. Stroink concluded.

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The American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS), founded in 1931, and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS), founded in 1951, are the two largest scientific and educational associations for neurosurgical professionals in the world. These groups represent over 8,000 neurosurgeons worldwide. Neurological surgery is the medical specialty concerned with the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of disorders that affect the entire nervous system, including the spinal column, spinal cord, brain and peripheral nerves. For more information, please visit www.aans.org or www.cns.org, read our blog www.neurosurgeryblog.org, follow us on [Twitter](#) or connect with us on [Facebook](#).