

Earlier this week, I chaired a hearing in the Ways and Means Health Subcommittee about reforming Medicare's payments to physicians. We heard four doctors explain how their organizations have implemented approaches driven by the private sector to bring down costs. As you may know, Medicare payments to physicians are scheduled to be cut by almost 30% at the end of this month. It is important for Congress to act, as we have in the past, to prevent these cuts, which would force many physicians to stop participating in Medicare and make it more difficult for seniors to get access to the health care they need. However, I believe we must also go beyond the usual short-term fixes and find long-term solutions that reward the physicians who offer high-value health care. Unfortunately, most efforts to do this in the past, including those authorized by President Obama's health care law, have failed to achieve their goals because they relied on top-down mandates, forcing health care providers to accept solutions mandated by government bureaucracies. I believe that permanently resolving the issue of Medicare physician payments requires a bottom-up approach where doctors help develop ideas that actually create a better system. This hearing was an important step in that direction. The ideas we heard from physicians who have personal experience in developing innovative approaches to improving health care quality will be helpful as my subcommittee continues its work to ensure that physicians receive fair and sufficient payments from Medicare.