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March 27, 2008

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate
SH-133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-2204

Dear Senator Stabenow:

On behalf of the over 74,000 Fellows of the American College of Surgeons, I am writing to express the College's support for S. 2785, the "Save Medicare Act of 2008." Thank you for introducing this important legislation, which would help preserve access to high quality surgical care.

The title of your legislation rightly recognizes the central role of physicians in caring for Medicare beneficiaries. Yet, as you know, on July 1, 2008, Medicare payments for surgical care are scheduled to be cut 10.6 percent. Your legislation would stop this 10.6 percent cut and maintain current Medicare payment levels through the end of 2008. Further, S. 2785 would take the important additional step of replacing the scheduled 5 percent cut in Medicare payments in 2009 with an increase of 1.8 percent. The uncertainty of Medicare payment levels makes it increasingly difficult for surgeons and their practices to plan for the practice expenses that they will incur as they serve their patients. If enacted, your legislation would enable surgeons and surgical practices to plan for these rising costs that they will continue to face over the next year and a half. Finally, by addressing payment levels through 2009, your legislation would not only provide much needed time but also would establish a foundation from Congress could further study the systemic reforms needed to preserve access to quality surgical care and other physician services.

Again, on behalf of the American College of Surgeons, thank you for introducing this important legislation. The College stands ready work with you in this effort to preserve Americans' access to quality surgical care.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Russell, MD, FACS
Executive Director

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