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October 2, 2014

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**NASPGHAN Annual Meeting &
Postgraduate Course**
October 22-25, 2014
Atlanta, GA

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
United States Senate
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Brown:

On behalf of the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN), I offer the Society's endorsement of S. 2694, the "Ensuring Access to Primary Care for Women and Children Act." We thank you for introducing this important legislation that would extend the application of the Medicare payment rate for primary care services under the Medicaid program beyond 2014 when the Medicaid payment parity policy is scheduled to expire. This policy has helped to provide early access to crucial health care services for very young patients across the country and it is critical that the policy is extended.

NASPGHAN is an organization comprised of 1,500 members who have specialized training and expertise in caring for children with disorders of the digestive system, liver and nutrition. According to Medicaid and CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC), a large body of research has demonstrated that low Medicaid reimbursement rates can significantly affect a physician's ability to accept new Medicaid patients into his or her practice, providing enhanced access to primary care services for the nation's children.

State interviews conducted in 2012-2013 by MACPAC indicated that several states are unlikely to continue the increased payment if they have to finance it without federal support. In addition, some states voiced concern that if the payment increase is discontinued in 2015, it may negatively impact efforts to recruit physicians to the Medicaid program. In 2008, prior to implementation of the Medicaid payment parity policy, Medicaid payment rates were on average 66 percent of Medicare rates. A return to these insufficient rates will likely result in decreased access to care for Medicaid patients.

Senator Brown
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NASPGHAN believes that all physicians seeing Medicaid patients should be paid at least the Medicare rate to ensure adequate access to primary care for our nation's children. We believe that this bill is an important step in that direction, and thank you for your leadership in sponsoring this legislation. We look forward to working with you to make sure this bill becomes law. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Geoff Werth at gwerth@summithealthconsulting.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Athos Bousvaros".

Athos Bousvaros, M.D.
NASPGHAN President