

*WASHINGTON, DC (June 24, 2010) – Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) statement on House passage of H.R. 3961, which prevents cuts in payments to Medicare physicians*

This week, the first round of provider payments with a 21% cut was sent to physicians who treat Medicare beneficiaries.

This drastic reduction in reimbursements is quite simply unacceptable. Doctors in my district who provide life-saving care to seniors and people with disabilities have called me to say they won't be able to see Medicare patients much longer. Patients have called begging that we prevent the cuts.

I am a strong supporter of a permanent fix to the flawed sustainable growth rate that continues to create instability for providers and uncertainty for Medicare beneficiaries.

HR 3961, which passed the House in November 2009, would have responsibly fixed the flawed

formula - but Senate Republicans have refused to come to the table to negotiate a permanent solution. For that reason, while I will vote for this bill to stop the pay cuts, I think it falls far short of what is needed.

Under the pay-go agreement, we had agreed to fix physician payments without taking money from other parts of Medicare until December 31, 2011. I am disappointed that we have not stuck to this original agreement.

Senate Amendments to HR 3962 – also known as the physician payment fix - is not perfect legislation. But without action this cut will create a crisis for Medicare beneficiaries and providers. I simply cannot allow that to happen, and will vote in support of this bill.

This bill will ensure that doctors who see Medicare patients over the next six months receive fair payments. It will ensure that senior citizens and persons with disabilities have access to their doctors. And it gives us time to permanently fix the flawed formula. It is not perfect, but it would be irresponsible not to act.