



**AMERICAN SOCIETY
FOR RADIATION ONCOLOGY**

251 18th St. South, 8th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202

Main: 703.502.1550

Fax: 703.502.7852

www.astro.org • www.ranswers.org

Board of Directors

CHAIR

Jeff M. Michalski, MD, MBA, FASTRO
Siteman Cancer Center,
Washington University
St. Louis

PRESIDENT

Howard Sandler, MD, MS, FASTRO
Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
Los Angeles

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Sameer Keole, MD, FASTRO
Mayo Clinic
Phoenix

IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR

**Geraldine M. Jacobson, MD, MBA,
MPH, FASTRO**
H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and
Research Institute
Tampa, Florida

December 7, 2023

Representative Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
US House of Representatives
242 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Jen Kiggans
US House of Representatives
1037 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Cherfilus-McCormick and Kiggans,

The American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) supports eliminating the pay cap for Department of Veterans Affairs Therapeutic Medical Physicists (TMPs). ASTRO is the largest radiation oncology society in the world, with more than 10,000 members, including TMPs, who specialize in treating patients with a variety of radiation therapy techniques. TMPs work closely with radiation oncologists and play an invaluable role in helping to treat patients with cancer.

Qualified medical physicists work directly with the radiation oncologist during treatment planning and delivery, and help ensure that complex treatments are properly tailored for each patient. Medical physicists have extensive training and are responsible for developing and directing quality control programs for equipment and procedures. Their responsibility also includes making sure the equipment works properly by taking precise measurements of the radiation beam and performing other safety tests on a regular basis.

Inadequate TMP support can place Veterans at risk for radiation injury or inappropriate treatment. Over the past fifteen years, TMP salaries in the private sector have increased as radiation therapy has become more sophisticated and more common. Private sector salaries for TMPs have reached a level that inhibits the VA's ability to directly recruit qualified individuals to fill these positions because of current pay cap requirements.

Currently, most of the VA's radiation oncology services are performed by contractors. Contracts for TMP services are awarded for a short period (typically 1-3 years), which results in frequent turnover that can be operationally disruptive and potentially dangerous from the perspective of quality care and patient safety. By ending the use of expensive TMP contractors, the VA would save money overall even while raising salaries and hiring more

federal TMPs. The VA estimated a similar proposal for FY19 would save the Department \$45 million over ten years.

ASTRO believes that this legislation would allow the VA to pay TMPs competitively ensuring retention of this important member of the radiation oncology treatment team. We urge Congress to swiftly pass this legislation to help ensure the safe and effective treatment of Veterans receiving radiation treatments

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Thevenot". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Laura" and last name "Thevenot" clearly distinguishable.

Laura I. Thevenot
Chief Executive Officer