



November 25, 2015

The Honorable Tom Price, MD
U.S. House of Representatives
100 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Dr. Price:

On behalf of ASTRO's 10,000 members worldwide, including all 4,500 board-certified U.S. radiation oncologists practicing in freestanding and hospital-based centers, we commend you for introducing H.R. 3950, the "Meaningful Use Hardship Relief Act of 2015." We appreciate that if passed, this bill would ensure that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) would be able to grant relief to physicians and providers from the 2015 Meaningful Use (MU) program without wasting provider or agency resources.

Despite the final rules not being published until mid-October, providers must now report MU measures for at least a 90-day period in 2015, leaving less than the allotted time to report this year. With this delay, physicians and hospitals are now facing significant financial penalties with an even shorter turnaround time. The new rules also add additional requirements, leaving physicians no time to upgrade systems and change workflows to meet the new program measures in 2015.

CMS announced that it will broadly grant hardship exceptions for the 2015 reporting year for providers affected by the lateness of the final rules. However, the MU statute requires that providers apply for and be granted exceptions only on a case-by-case basis, requiring individual applications, review, and approval. This process puts a significant burden on providers whose resources are already strained to meet the requirements.

With all MU participants effected by the delay, we expect that there will be a large number of hardship applications. CMS has said that it would prefer to process these requests in a more efficient manner, preserving the agency's resources and reducing burdens for physicians and other providers. H.R. 3950 is a practical solution to this problem allowing for a limited exception for 2015 to process these necessary hardship applications more efficiently.

We appreciate your dedication and willingness to address this issue to ensure that MU participants are not unfairly penalized and that patient resources are not spent on administrative tasks. We look forward to working with you to address these potential burdens on radiation oncologists. If you have any questions, please contact Dave Adler, ASTRO's Vice President of Advocacy, at (703) 839-7362.

Sincerely,

Laura I. Thevenot
Chief Executive Officer