

Alaska State Legislature

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Senate Joint Resolution 10 Sponsor Statement

"Encouraging Alaska's Congressional delegation and the federal government to raise Medicare reimbursement rates to meet the actual cost of care for the state's senior citizens."

Alaska's senior population has been the fastest growing, per capita, in the nation for the past ten years, in a state whose medical costs are among the highest in the nation. This increase has triggered a demand for more healthcare services, from basic in-home assistance to high levels of acute care. The medical system is struggling to provide the appropriate level of care for seniors under persistent workforce challenges and the inadequate Medicare reimbursement rates that simply do not cover the cost for services.

This untenable situation elevates the need for the rebasing of Medicare reimbursement rates as an immediate priority.

Healthcare providers who do accept Medicare have long been struggling to stay profitable and retain staff. Some providers, who almost exclusively serve the senior community, have had to shut down due to staffing issues originating in part from uncompetitive Medicare reimbursement rates. For these reasons, many more medical providers are choosing not to accept new Medicare patients. This has left countless Alaskans without access to reliable and affordable health care. The lack of available Medicare providers is driving more and more financially vulnerable Alaskans to emergency rooms and urgent care clinics, exposing them to unnecessarily high medical bills and putting further strain on the system.

The hard truth is that our aging seniors who rely on Medicare to cover the cost of their medical services do not have time to wait for the long and deliberative process of policy making to play out. This is why we must urge the President and our federal delegation to act now.

Senate Joint Resolution 10 sends a strong message to our federal delegation by asking them to take immediate action on lagging Medicare reimbursement rates that are detrimentally affecting our healthcare providers and access to appropriate care for Alaskans.

Please join me in support of this critical resolution that seeks to help Alaska's seniors by bringing Medicare's lagging rates to the attention of our federal representatives.