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March 19, 2019

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senate
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
U.S. Senate
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Brown and Wicker:

On behalf of the more than 80,000 members of the American College of Surgeons (ACS), I would like to express our continued support for the Removing Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening Act, S. 668. This legislation would eliminate an unintended cost barrier for Medicare beneficiaries to life-saving colorectal cancer screening. According to the National Cancer Institute, colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer related death, when the data for men and women are combined. This statistic is especially troubling since colorectal cancer is largely preventable thanks to effective screening methods.

Under current law, Medicare waives co-insurance and deductibles for preventative colonoscopies. However, when a polyp is discovered and removed, the procedure is reclassified as therapeutic for Medicare billing purposes and patients are required to pay the coinsurance. This bipartisan legislation would waive Medicare's cost-sharing requirement for preventative colonoscopies, even if a polyp or tissue is removed. Not only is the cost-sharing obligation of current law confusing to patients, but it also results in the unintended consequence of creating a financial barrier to the most effective method of colorectal cancer prevention. S. 668 would help to ensure that the threat of unanticipated costs do not deter a patient from having the screening performed.

By removing this financial barrier, Congress would help increase screening rates and reduce the incidence of colorectal cancer. We thank you for your efforts and leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

David Hoyt, MD, FACS
Executive Director

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