



H.R. 539, USPSTF Transparency and Accountability Act

The National Association of Spine Specialists (NASS) urges Congress to require that the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) have greater accountability and transparency. We urge lawmakers to **cosponsor H.R. 539, the “USPSTF Transparency and Accountability Act,”** introduced in the House by Representatives Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) and Bobby Rush (D-IL). The House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee held a hearing on the bill on November 30, 2016, and we urge the committee to schedule the bill for further consideration.

BACKGROUND

The “USPSTF Transparency and Accountability Act” includes critical reforms that would require the USPSTF to: (1) publish research plans and make available reports on such evidence and recommendations for public comment; (2) ensure that medical specialty physicians are included on the Task Force; (3) establish a stakeholders board to advise it on developing, updating, publishing and disseminating evidence-based recommendations; (4) codify the grading system so it cannot be changed without appropriate review; and (5) ensure that Medicare or other payors cannot deny payment for a preventive service solely based on the task force grade.

RATIONALE

There has been concern regarding a number of USPSTF recommendations, including those related to mammography, skin cancer screening, and prostate-specific antigen (PSA) screening, and their effect on limiting access to high quality, patient-centered care for Americans. Many times these recommendations contradict physician clinical guidelines based on medical literature, the American Cancer Society, and others with expertise in the clinical topic under review. Recommendations and consideration of the scientific evidence are important, but the reality of these recommendations are undermining new models of care delivery that are patient-centered, comprehensive, coordinated, accessible, and focused on quality.

NASS is concerned that the USPSTF has little accountability. Its members are appointed by the Director of AHRQ, who is not confirmed by Congress. In addition, the Task Force is not required to meet with relevant stakeholders during their review process, nor do medical specialists in the subject under review serve on the Task Force or have a formalized role to provide appropriate input. It is imperative that the USPSTF implement procedures that allow for meaningful input from appropriate medical experts during evidence-based recommendation development.

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