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February 16, 2022

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Shaheen and Senator Collins,

The Association for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) applauds your bipartisan commitment to strengthening our nation's healthcare system. ASCO represents nearly 45,000 clinical oncologists, researchers, and other oncology professionals who treat and study patients with cancer across the country. We are pleased to endorse the *Provider Relief Fund Improvement Act*, which ensures our nation's healthcare providers have access to and the ability to use the funding allocated through the Provider Relief Fund.

ASCO is grateful for Congress' efforts to mitigate the financial stress that healthcare institutions and providers have incurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically through funds distributed via the Provider Relief Fund. However, as the public health emergency continues, Congress must provide greater flexibility for providers to access and use these funds to ensure this funding provides the intended relief to our healthcare system. The American Society of Clinical Oncology, the Association's affiliate organization, "[Road to Recovery Report: Learning From the COVID-19 Experience to Improve Clinical Research and Cancer Care](#)," published in January 2021, specifically notes that pandemic-related changes implemented by cancer clinicians may be in place for the foreseeable future (eg, social distancing, extended office hours, pre-visit screening, and new practice configurations). These important measures have put additional financial strain on practices, especially those in underserved areas," and recommends that, "pandemic-related financial relief and policies need to be extended or made permanent in order to support a sustained recovery period for cancer care providers."

The *Provider Relief Fund Improvement Act* would assist providers across the country as we continue to recover from the setbacks and financial hardships caused by the ongoing pandemic. It includes important steps towards relieving the financial crisis that the pandemic and looming cuts to Medicare reimbursement has created, including: guaranteeing the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) distributes the remaining Phase 4 funds by March 31, 2022,

allowing recipients until June 2023 to spend these crucial funds, creating an avenue for providers who had to return funds allocated early in the public health emergency to again apply for that funding, and providing clarity on how the funds can be used.

ASCO looks forward to working with you as you advance this important legislation. Should you have any questions or would like to discuss further please do not hesitate to contact Kristin Stuart at Kristin.Stuart@asco.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Howard Burris" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Howard "Skip" Burris, MD, FASCO
Chair of the Board
Association for Clinical Oncology