March 11, 2020

The Honorable Terri Sewell
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Adrian Smith
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tony Cardenas
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Shimkus
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Representatives Sewell, Smith, Cardenas, and Shimkus:

The American College of Rheumatology (ACR), representing over 7,700 rheumatologists and rheumatology interprofessional team members, writes to support and thank you for introducing H.R. 5741, the **Strengthening Innovation in Medicare and Medicaid Act** which would establish important guardrails to protect patients and their providers from the unintended consequences of new Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) payment models. ACR is pleased to support this legislation and applauds you for your work on this issue.

As a specialty that largely maintains long-term patient relationships, the ACR has long supported the transition away from fee-for-service payment models and more focus on high-quality, patient-centered, value-based care. While we support innovation pertaining to paying for medical care, testing new models without appropriate safeguards can lead to unintended practice burdens and barriers to care for patients. The consequences of testing new models weigh especially heavy on rheumatologists practicing and patients residing in rural and underserved areas.

The **Strengthening Innovation in Medicare and Medicaid Act** creates important transparency requirements, rule-making protections, and hardship exemptions that would offer rheumatology professionals more insight into CMMI’s process. The legislation will protect practices from requirements that may result in undue economic hardship and patients from restricted access to care resulting from requirements applied to areas with vulnerable populations.

Thank you for your attention to the needs of rheumatology practices of all sizes, and those that serve patients in rural and underserved communities. The ACR looks forward to working with you to reduce these unintended burdens and barriers and ensure that all patients living with rheumatic disease have access to high-quality care. If you have any additional questions, please contact Lennie Shewmaker, JD, Director of Congressional Affairs, at LShewmaker@rheumatology.org.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Blair Solow, MD, MSCS
Chair, Government Affairs Committee
American College of Rheumatology