2. HOUSE PANEL EXAMINES MACRA IMPLEMENTATION

On Wednesday, May 11, the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health held a hearing on the implementation of the *Medicare Access & CHIP Reauthorization Act* (MACRA). The witness at the hearing was the Acting Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Andy Slavitt. Most of the discussion centered on the proposed rule, which it released on April 27.

The hearing built on several recurring themes, including the reporting burdens placed on small and rural practices. Reps. Sam Johnson (R-TX) and Tom Price (R-GA) in particular referred to an impact table in the rule that predicts that 87 percent of solo practices will experience lower payment under MIPS. Mr. Slavitt consistently defended the proposed system as one that small practices can succeed in. He replied that small practices, "so long as they report, can do just as well as those in larger sized practices." He added: "We know that the burden is on us to make the reporting as easy as possible." He explained that CMS had met with many groups of physicians while preparing the rule, (including the AAFP), and told the subcommittee that "one of their key requests" is to not require physicians to report data twice.

Another prominent theme was asking whether CMS and participating physicians would be ready in time. Rep. Kenny Marchant (R-TX) asked whether CMS had enough time and resources to meet all its deadlines, which Mr. Slavitt answered in the affirmative. Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA) asked him what physicians needed to do to prepare, to which he responded that CMS is doing everything possible to ensure that physicians "focus on patients—don't worry about scorekeeping."

3. FDA EXPANDS ITS AUTHORITY TO REGULATE TOBACCO PRODUCTS

On May 6, the Food and Drug Administration announced that it would use its authority to prevent the sale and use of products like cigars and electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) to those under 18. Specifically, the FDA asserted the authority to establish product standards for deemed tobacco products, which allow the agency to restrict, limit or ban ingredients in the these products or constituents in tobacco smoke.

The AAFP has been a consistent advocate for strong FDA authority and praised the agency for its long-awaited decision. In addition, 17 Senate Democrats sent a letter to the agency supporting the decision but urging the agency to bold steps to protect public health. The letter pushed the FDA to act quickly help reduce risks to young people such as advertisements targeted adolescent audiences and to ban use of fruit and candy flavoring marketed to attract new and younger users.

4. THE SENATE SCHEDULES DEBATE ON ZIKA FUNDING

On May 13, the AAFP joined 37 medical and health organizations in an organizational letter to members of the U.S. Senate urging immediate action to provide emergency funding for the Zika virus preparedness activities. The letter states the importance of taking action before mosquito season begins. In April, advocates also urged Congress to provide emergency funds needed for surveillance, vector control, and services for affected pregnant women and children.

5. HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE REVIEWS CONCUSSIONS RESEARCH AND PREVENTION

On May 13, the House Energy and Commerce's Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing on the research into youth sports concussions and how to prevent them. Rep. Tim Murphy (R-PA), who chairs the subcommittee, discussed the need to examine sports and safety guidelines to reduce the risk of injuries to the 30 million children who participate in sports. The hearing focused improving surveillance, public health awareness, and research.