

LOBBYISTS EXPECT YEAR-END PACKAGE TO COME INTO FOCUS, PROVIDERS MAKE LAST-MINUTE PUSH TO AVOID PAY CUTS

Health care provisions in a potential year-end legislative package are still in flux -- as is timing -- but some lobbyists believe the health policies could start to come into clearer focus this week, as providers go to Capitol Hill to make their case for Congress to fully offset the cuts to the physician fee schedule.

Many lobbyists anticipate an omnibus spending package that could include a waiver of upcoming PAYGO cuts, as well as extensions of policies set to expire, and mitigation of the 2023 physician fee schedule cuts.

More than 100 provider groups wrote to House and Senate leadership asking for lawmakers to do away with the entire 4.5% conversion factor cut in the 2023 physician fee schedule. That letter kicks off what the groups are calling a week of action on the Hill to push for such a policy. "We cannot overstate the importance of Congress stopping the entirety of the upcoming 4.5% reduction. Anything less will result in an across-the-board cut that will further exacerbate the significant financial hardship clinicians are already facing and undermine Medicare's ability to deliver on its promises to seniors and future generations," the letter says.

Late last week, one congressional aide said the physician fee schedule policy wasn't yet settled. Still, some lobbyists believe the providers could realistically see anywhere from 2.25- 3.5 percent in relief, rather than see the cuts erased in their entirety, and one lobbyist said anything over 3 percent could be considered a win for providers. Last year, lawmakers eased 3 percent of the conversion factor cuts set for 2022, leaving 0.75 percent to go into effect.