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October 12, 2006

Dear Senator:


On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) and the Academic Family Medicine Advocacy Alliance (AFMAA), we are requesting your signature on the Collins-Durbin, "Dear Colleague" letter regarding resident physician training. This letter urges Senate leadership to take necessary legislative action to resolve a continuing problem with CMS interpretations of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (BBA) that is harming graduate medical education programs throughout our nation.

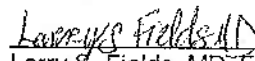
Since early 2003, family medicine and other health and medical organizations have been concerned with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) policy disallowing the use of volunteer teachers. CMS has compromised the training of resident physicians by often denying the time residents spend in non-hospital settings. Provisions of the BBA that allowed payment for time training in the non-hospital setting were intended to improve graduate medical education training programs and increase the number of physicians serving in rural and underserved communities by encouraging such training. CMS's administrative actions have circumvented the intent of Congress as expressed in the BBA.

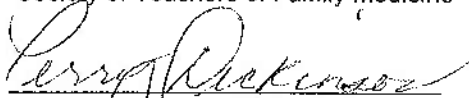
The effect of these actions has threatened the continued existence of many family medicine graduate medical education training programs. These programs are vital to providing the nation a supply of high-quality primary care physicians. Over the past year, numerous studies have been published that warn of a severe physician shortage, especially for rural and underserved populations.

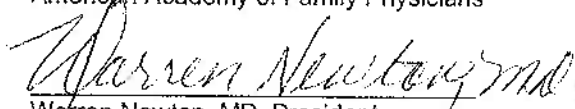
We agree with the Congressional intent of the BBA -- graduate medical education policies should work to correct these shortages, rather than worsening them. We ask that you will sign on to the Collins-Durbin letter to request legislative action to resolve this issue before the end of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress.

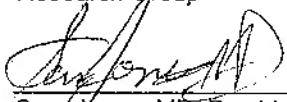
Sincerely,

  
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