



January 9, 2023

To Freshmen Members of the 118th Congress:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents more than 127,6000 physicians and students, I'd like to congratulate you on your election to the 118th Congress. Your election to the Congress comes amid a pandemic that has altered our health care landscape – emphasizing the need to bolster the strength and vitality of our health care system and the people it serves.

The AAFP's mission is to strengthen family physicians and the communities they care for, ensuring our nation has a robust primary care system and all patients have access to affordable, equitable, comprehensive health care.

Family physicians provide comprehensive care for the entire family—from birth through end-of-life. The scope of family medicine encompasses all ages and sexes, each organ system, and every disease entity. It is a specialty that integrates the biological, clinical, and behavioral sciences. This care includes caring for patients regardless of age or health condition, understanding community-level factors and social determinants of health, helping patients navigate specialty and hospital care coordination, leveraging data and technology to improve the quality of care, and assessing the patient's family medical history to dictate the appropriate degrees of care. Family physicians are often a patient's first point of contact with the health care system. In the United States, one in five medical office visits are conducted by family physicians, with 195 million visits to family physicians annually.

Family physicians are also integral members of their communities and see firsthand how pervasive health inequities contribute to poor health outcomes. As such, they play an integral role in improving the health of the public by caring for and advocating on behalf of their patients.

The AAFP is focused on advancing the below priorities, and we believe there are many opportunities for us to work together with the 118th Congress.

Realizing the Value of Primary Care – Primary care physicians play a critical role in delivering high-quality, comprehensive health care. But the U.S. health care system continues to underinvest in this foundational element. To truly achieve the promises of health reform – better care, better health, and lower costs-- we need delivery and payment systems that prioritize primary and preventive care and provide physicians with the resources and flexibility they need. Most urgently, Congress needs to reform Medicare physician payment to avoid the need for further stopgap measures, protect beneficiaries' access to care, and slow the alarming rate of health care consolidation.

Strengthening the Primary Care Workforce – Primary care has never been more important but continues to face urgent challenges. The United States will need up to 48,000 more primary care physicians by 2034 in order to meet growing patient demand. We continue advocate for policies that create and shape a robust and diverse primary care workforce that is best positioned to serve all communities, including our underserved and rural populations.

STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

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Addressing Administrative Burden – Family physicians face a regulatory framework that has not only increased operation costs but has affected their time with patients. It's a major contributor to the closure of independent practices and physicians' decision to leave the profession altogether. We believe there are opportunities to reduce burdens that stand in the way of effective patient care and better health outcomes.

Improving Health Care for All – As we continue to navigate the pandemic, we still face the challenge of improving access to quality, affordable health care for all Americans. Building on the foundation to provide meaningful health care coverage, including preventive service benefits and protections for patients with pre-existing conditions is a top priority. We must continue to build upon this and identify opportunities for change where systemic challenges continue.

Prioritizing Public Health – The COVID-19 pandemic and other recent public health threats have underscored the need for a robust, well-coordinated public infrastructure that is closely integrated with primary care. As policymakers seek improvements, the AAFP can provide critical frontline perspective on a range of crucial issues.

I congratulate you on your election to Congress and know we stand ready to partner with you to work through the challenges facing our nation's health care system in order to improve the lives of all Americans. Please contact David Tully, Vice President of Government Relations at dtully@aafp.org should you have any questions about family medicine or wish to explore ways we can collaborate further to improve the health of your constituents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "STERLING N. RANSONE, JR. MD FAFAP". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sterling N. Ransone, Jr., MD, FAFAP
Board Chair, American Academy of Family Physicians