



December 17, 2024

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President-elect
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President-elect Trump:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents more than 130,000 family physicians and medical students across the United States, we write to congratulate you on your election as the 47th President of the United States. We look forward to working closely with your new Administration and the 119th Congress to ensure all Americans have access to high quality health care.

Family physicians are uniquely qualified to provide comprehensive care for the entire family – from birth through end-of-life. The scope of family medicine encompasses all ages, each organ system and every disease entity, including pediatrics, obstetrics and reproductive care, and behavioral health. It is a specialty in breadth that integrates the biological, clinical and behavioral sciences. This includes: caring for patients regardless of age or health condition, understanding community-level factors and social determinants of health, providing support as the patient's first contact for health concerns, 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. In the United States, one in five office visits are conducted by family physicians, with 195 million visits to family physicians annually.

We believe there are opportunities to work with the Trump administration on priorities identified below, which will help ensure accessible, affordable health care for all Americans.

Recognizing the Value of Primary Care - Primary care serves as the foundation of a strong health care system, providing preventive care, chronic disease management, and continuity of care. Recognizing its value is crucial for improving health outcomes, reducing health care costs, and enhancing patient satisfaction. Areas with more primary care physicians such as family physicians have lower total healthcare costs due to better preventive care and fewer hospitalizations and emergency room visits. Patient who regularly see a primary care physician have a 19% lower chance of dying prematurely than those who only see another specialist. Elevating the role of primary care ensures that resources and support are adequately allocated to this critical aspect of the health care system.

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- Increase federal investments in primary care by implementing long-term, comprehensive reforms to fee-for-service payment, including the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule, to ensure the longitudinal, continuous relationship between the patient and their primary care is appropriately valued;
- Implement immediate reforms to the Medicare Physician Fee schedule for 2026, including expansion of the Primary Care Exception to include all levels of evaluation/management codes;
- Ensure that innovations developed and tested by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation are swiftly implemented across health programs to facilitate a more meaningful transition to value-based payment; and
- Support the viability of independent physician practices and protect physicians' clinical autonomy by addressing health care consolidation and misaligned incentives, such as site of service payment differentials.

Reducing Administrative Burden - Administrative tasks, such as excessive documentation, prior authorizations, and billing requirements, consume valuable time and resources for health care providers. Reducing this burden allows physicians to focus more on patient care, enhances job satisfaction, and increases efficiency within the health care system, ultimately improving the quality of care and patient outcomes.

- Maintain and accelerate bipartisan momentum on reducing administrative burden and prior authorization across federal health programs;
- Reduce the burden associated with quality and performance reporting so that it is commensurate with the financial incentives for participation;
- Reform the regulatory compliance burdens that drive independent practices to close, which results in anti-competitive consolidation and reduced physician autonomy; and
- Advance health information and emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and machine learning, by expanding interoperability efforts and centering patient choice and privacy.

Increasing and Sustaining the Family Physician Workforce - Family physicians are in high demand, yet the workforce faces shortages due to an aging population and physician burnout. Increasing and sustaining the workforce requires policies that promote training, support, and retention of family physicians. Efforts like enhanced medical education, loan forgiveness programs, and better compensation are essential to attracting and maintaining a strong family physician workforce.

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- Maintain and support physician-led, team-based primary care through federal training programs that maximize physician choice and patient access by allowing people to be trained in the communities where they want to practice medicine – not just in urban areas and academic institutions;
- Support the Federal Trade Commission rule that prohibited coercive physician noncompete clauses which reduce patient access and discourage the formation of physician-led small businesses; and
- Empower physician-led small businesses to create economic opportunities in rural and economically depressed areas by incentivizing the business of medicine by individual physicians, including but not limited to tax relief, debt relief or more lucrative payment policies.

Improving Health Care - Ensuring that all individuals have access to high-quality healthcare is essential for improving population health. This involves addressing disparities in health care access, affordability, and quality, as well as fostering equitable care across all demographics. Policies should focus on expanding access to underserved populations, improving care coordination, and promoting preventive services to achieve better health outcomes for all.

- Ensure that all Americans can drive their own health outcomes by removing government-imposed barriers that prevent physicians and patients from making their own healthcare decisions;
- Improve individual and population health outcomes by ensuring all individuals continue to have access to affordable health care coverage across public and private payers;
- Support funding for the National Academies of Medicine to conduct an updated, in-depth, science-based examination of every adverse event related to vaccination;
- Fund and strengthen Immunization Information Systems (IIS) to ensure vaccine data including adverse events) are consistently reported, shared, and accessible;
- Establish permanent telehealth regulations in order to enhance long-term patient-physician relationships, increase patient access to care, and improve health outcomes nationwide;
- Ensure access to appropriate, evidence-based treatment for patients with opioid use disorder (OUD);
- Improve maternal and infant health outcomes and address disparities, particularly in rural and underserved communities; and
- Improve funding and education on the congenital syphilis epidemic; a largely preventable condition which has increased ten-fold in the United States from 2012 to 2022.

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On behalf of the AAFP, we again congratulate you on your election to the presidency and stand ready to partner with you and your administration on ways that we can work through the challenges facing our nation's health care system in order to improve the lives of all Americans. For more information, please contact David Tully, Vice President of Government Relations, at dtully@aafp.org.

Sincerely,

Steve Furr, MD, FAAFP
Board Chair

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