



April 18, 2023

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Raul Ruiz, M.D.
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gabriel Vasquez
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ranking Member Pallone and Representatives Ruiz and Vasquez:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents 129,600 family physicians and medical students across the country, I write to share our organization's strong support for the Doctors of Community (DOC) Act (H.R. 2569).

Your legislation would permanently extend and expand the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program, which has played a vital role in training the next generation of primary care physicians and addressing the physician shortage. The AAFP has long advocated for a permanent extension of the THCGME Program to ensure stability for teaching health centers and the residents they train.

The U.S. will need up to 48,000 additional primary care physicians by 2034 to meet the health care needs of our growing and aging population. The THCGME program is one of the most successful and efficiently run programs in the country and has a proven track record of achieving its legislative mandate to train the next generation of primary care physicians. To date, the THCGME program has trained more than 1,730 primary care physicians and dentists, 63 percent of whom are family physicians. Additionally, THCGME graduates are more likely to continue practicing primary care medicine and serving in medically underserved communities than those in traditional Medicare GME-supported programs.

Primary care is the only health care component where an increased supply is associated with better population health and more equitable outcomes. Despite these benefits, only about 5-7 percent of overall health care expenditures is invested in primary care. The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the urgency of building and financing a robust, well-trained, and accessible primary care system in our country. The DOC Act will help address the primary care workforce shortage in communities that need them the most - rural and medically underserved communities.

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The AAFP applauds the introduction of the DOC Act and stands ready to help you pass this important legislation. If you have questions, please contact David Tully, Vice President of Government Relations, at dtully@aafp.org.

Sincerely,

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

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