



September 14, 2023

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Chairwoman
House Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Rodgers and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), representing more than 129,600 family physicians and medical students across the country, I write to thank you and your colleagues for including provisions in the *Lower Costs, More Transparency Act* (H.R. 5378) that would reauthorize and fund programs that are critical to family physicians, as well as ensure that patients are paying the same price for the same service regardless of the setting where it's provided.

The AAFP has been a [tireless advocate](#) for the Teaching Health Centers Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program since its inception. To date, the THCGME program has trained more than 1,730 primary care physicians and dentists in community-based settings, 63 percent of whom are family physicians. Therefore, we strongly applaud your legislation's reauthorization of the THCGME program for an unprecedented seven years with significant increases in funding that will help cover the cost of training an increased number of medical residents.

The THCGME provisions in H.R. 5378 are nearly identical to those contained in the *PATIENT Act* (H.R. 3561), which the Committee reported out unanimously, reflecting strong bipartisan support. We are grateful to you both for being steadfast champions of THCGME, recognizing the unique role that THCs play in training the next generation of primary care physicians. We believe the proposed increased total annual funding for the THCGME program is particularly warranted considering the substantial savings for the healthcare system that THC residencies create.

We also appreciate the extension of the Community Health Center (CHC) Fund through calendar year (CY) 2025 at \$4.4 billion per year and the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) through CY 2025 at \$350 million per year. Family physicians are the most common type of clinician (46%) practicing in CHCs, which provide comprehensive primary care and preventive services to some of the most vulnerable and underserved Americans. Increased funding for CHCs is essential to better meet the health workforce needs of the underserved and to increase access to comprehensive primary care in our most vulnerable communities.

Finally, we appreciate that your legislation ensures payment for physician drug administration services will be the same in a physician's office as an off-campus hospital outpatient department (HOPD). The AAFP remains in [strong support](#) of site neutral payment policies that would establish payment parity across care settings and has called for an expansion of site neutrality to all on-campus and off-campus hospital-based departments, as well as other facilities. We support reducing

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payment differences between sites of service since it enables patients to make more informed healthcare decisions by making costs more transparent and would reduce patient cost-sharing. As such, site neutral payment encourages patient choice based on quality rather than cost. It is the AAFP's policy that patients should have reasonable freedom to select their physicians, other providers, and healthcare settings.

Given that the THCGME, CHCs, and NHSC are all set to expire on September 30th, the AAFP is hopeful that the House of Representatives will pass your legislation as soon as possible. Failure to do so before their funding expires jeopardizes the stability of these critical programs.

The AAFP is deeply grateful for your leadership on this and looks forward to working with you to ensure passage of the *Lower Costs, More Transparency Act* before September 30th. Should you have any questions, please contact Kyle Gerron, Manager of Legislative Affairs, at kgerron@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