

May 24, 2011

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the five organizations representing family medicine, we are writing to oppose HR 1216, the bill to convert the mandatory appropriations under Section 5508 of the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPCA)*, which authorizes the Secretary to award teaching health centers development grants and appropriates \$230 million for 2011 through 2015 into an authorization subject to the annual appropriations process.

The American Academy of Family Physician (AAFP) and the Council of Academic Family Medicine (CAFM) supported the authorization in the health reform legislation of the innovative Teaching Health Centers program to increase primary care physician training capacity. Federal financing of graduate medical education has led to training that occurs mainly in hospital inpatient settings despite the fact that most patient care is delivered outside of hospitals in ambulatory settings across the nation. The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) and the Council on Graduate Medical Education have repeatedly called for the promotion of community-based residency training. The Teaching Health Center program will train primary care residents in non-hospital settings where most primary care is delivered.

If this program is to be effective, there must be adequate, predictable resources. There are currently 11 programs already funded under the mandatory appropriations. Repeal of this funding would abrogate the contract HRSA has made with them to provide funding for additional residents. Converting this program to discretionary funding also will deter other entities from making the business decisions necessary to expand residency training (e.g., securing commitments from key stakeholders to agree to train new or additional residents, applying for accreditation if not already part of an eligible consortia, and hiring new faculty) since funding over the next few years would be subject to the annual appropriations process.

Residency training programs in community- based settings are effective tools for the recruitment and retention of family medicine and other primary care physicians into community based practices, and the Teaching Health Center program as created by the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* is an innovative program that will help with the development of the primary care workforce, as well as the distribution of physicians into underserved areas. We ask that you not repeal this important authorization.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important program.

Sincerely,



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