

February 11, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Our organizations, which represent family physicians in 49 states, write to urge the House and Senate to take immediate action to reauthorize the **Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) Program**.

To date, the program has received widespread bipartisan and bicameral support; but short-term patches have been harmful for program stability. We urge you to bring *Training the Next Generation of Primary Care Doctors Act* (HR 2815/S. 1191) to the floor without delay to reauthorize this important program for five years. THCGME programs and prospective residents are making important decisions and they would benefit from knowing that the program will have long-term funding. In fact, on February 26, residency directors and prospective trainees must finalize rank order lists without assurances that the funding will come through for the length of the program.

Created in 2010, the THCGME program trains residents in several primary care specialties in community-based settings across the country. Not only does the THCGME program contribute to creating primary care workforce, a Robert Graham Center's *State of Primary Care report* found that physicians are more likely to practice in the state in which they completed residency -- creating needed access to care in rural and other medically underserved areas.

Decades of research show that U.S. states with higher ratios of primary care physician-to-population ratios have better health outcomes, including lower rates of all causes of mortality even controlling for sociodemographic status, like age, race, and employment status, and lifestyle factors such as obesity and tobacco use. At a time when the health care cost trajectory is unsustainable, we urge Congress to act to support a program that could yield an estimated \$1.8 billion in health care savings in Medicare and Medicaid by addressing health care needs outside of the hospital setting.

Primary care workforce programs, such as the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education Program, along with the Community Health Center Program and the National Health Service Corp Program, are essential resources to begin to increase the number of primary care physicians and to ensure they work in communities that need them most. Together, they achieve our shared goals of improving health care access, reducing primary care shortages, and providing care in underserved communities.

Again, we appreciate your continued support for this program and urge you to take action without delay. For more information, please contact the American Academy of Family Physicians at 202-232-9033.

Signed,

Alabama Academy of Family Physicians
Alaska Academy of Family Physicians
Arizona Academy of Family Physicians
Arkansas Academy of Family Physicians
California Academy of Family Physicians
Colorado Academy of Family Physicians
Connecticut Academy of Family Physicians
Delaware Academy of Family Physicians
Florida Academy of Family Physicians
Georgia Academy of Family Physicians
Hawaii Academy of Family Physicians
Idaho Academy of Family Physicians
Illinois Academy of Family Physicians
Indiana Academy of Family Physicians
Iowa Academy of Family Physicians
Kansas Academy of Family Physicians
Kentucky Academy of Family Physicians
Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians
Maine Academy of Family Physicians
Maryland Academy of Family Physicians
Massachusetts Academy of Family Physicians
Michigan Academy of Family Physicians
Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians
Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians
Missouri Academy of Family Physicians
Montana Academy of Family Physicians
Nebraska Academy of Family Physicians
Nevada Academy of Family Physicians
New Hampshire Academy of Family Physicians
New Jersey Academy of Family Physicians
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North Dakota Academy of Family Physicians
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Rhode Island Academy of Family Physicians
South Carolina Academy of Family Physicians
South Dakota Academy of Family Physicians
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Washington Academy of Family Physicians
West Virginia Academy of Family Physicians
Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians
Wyoming Academy of Family Physicians