

March 24, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
Chair, House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations  
Committee

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Ranking Member, House Appropriations  
Committee

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chair, Senate Labor-HHS Appropriations  
Subcommittee

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chair, House Labor-HHS Appropriations  
Subcommittee

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member, Senate Labor-HHS  
Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member, House Labor-HHS  
Appropriations Subcommittee

Dear House and Senate Appropriators:

Thank you in advance for your commitment to saving the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), which faces a funding cliff at the end of FY 2015. **The undersigned NHSC Stakeholders recommend a discretionary appropriation of \$287.4 million for FY 2016.** As the nation faces multiple health professional shortages, sustained, long-term investments in workforce programs are necessary to help care for our nation's most vulnerable populations. Recognizing that mandatory funding may be provided through other mechanisms, the appropriations committees still retain primary responsibility for funding the administrative functions of the NHSC and for avoiding budgetary lapses in future years.

Through more than 50 national organizations, the NHSC Stakeholders represent the multiple health professionals, institutions, and underserved areas/patients that benefit from the NHSC's history of public service.

The NHSC offers scholarship and loan repayment awards to primary care health professionals in exchange for practicing in a federally designated Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). Additionally, the NHSC matches funding for State-based loan repayment programs with similar missions.

The NHSC is widely recognized—both in Washington and in the underserved areas it helps—as a success on many fronts. The simple, yet historically effective design of the program:

- improves access to health care for the growing numbers of rural and urban underserved Americans;
- increases state investments in recruiting and retaining health professionals;
- provides incentives for practitioners to enter primary care;
- reduces the financial burden that the cost of health professions education places on new practitioners; and
- helps ensure access to health professions education for students from all backgrounds.

In spite of the NHSC's success, demand for health professionals across the country continues to grow. With a field strength of 9,242 in FY 2014 caring for more than 9.7 million patients<sup>1</sup>, the NHSC still fell far short of fulfilling the health care needs of all federally designated shortage areas. Even the potential 15,000 field strength envisioned in the president's budget will leave a number of underserved areas still lacking access to primary care.

As of September 30, 2014, the Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA) estimates that 18,100 additional practitioners are required to eliminate all current primary care, dental, and mental health HPSAs.<sup>2</sup>

In more tangible terms, the current NHSC practitioner deficit results in 59 million unserved primary care patients, 47 million unserved dental patients, and 96 million unserved mental health patients living within federally designated underserved areas spread across every state.<sup>3</sup>

Thank you for considering NHSC Stakeholders' recommendations. We look forward to working with Congress to help ensure a sustained, long-term investment in the NHSC without sacrificing other federal health professions training support. Should you have any questions, please contact Matthew Shick at <mshick@aamc.org> or 202-862-6116.

Sincerely,

The National Health Service Corps Stakeholders

Academy of General Dentistry

America's Essential Hospitals

American Academy of Family Physicians

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Academy of Physician Assistants

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine

American Association of Nurse Practitioners

American College of Nurse-Midwives

American College of Physicians

American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American Dental Association

American Dental Education Association

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<sup>1,2,3</sup> Fiscal Year 2016 Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees (HRSA, HHS, February 2015)  
<http://www.hrsa.gov/about/budget/budgetjustification2016.pdf>

American Dental Hygienists Association  
American Medical Association  
American Medical Student Association  
American Osteopathic Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Public Health Association  
American Society for Clinical Pathology  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations  
Association of Clinicians for the Underserved  
Association of Departments of Family Medicine  
Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors  
Association of Minority Health Professions Schools  
BlackDoctor.org  
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.  
Committee of Interns and Residents/SEIU Healthcare  
First Focus  
National AHEC Organization  
National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors  
National Association of Community Health Centers  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Association of Rural Health Clinics  
National Black Nurses Association  
National Council for Behavioral Health  
National Council for Diversity in the Health Professions  
National Health Care for the Homeless Council  
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties  
National Rural Health Association  
National Rural Recruitment and Retention Network – 3RNet  
North America Primary Care Research Group  
Physician Assistant Education Association  
Primary Care Progress  
Society of General Internal Medicine  
Society of Teachers of Family Medicine  
Student National Medical Association  
Trust for America’s Health