



January 28, 2021

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Marco Rubio
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Durbin and Rubio:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) and the 136,700 family physicians, residents, and medical students we represent, I write to offer our support for the *Strengthening America's Health Care Readiness Act*.

Your legislation addresses the health workforce shortages and disparities highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic through funding for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), as well as the establishment of a NHSC Emergency Service demonstration project. The historic investment in the NHSC and National Disaster Medical System will bolster health emergency surge capacity and help to restore the pipeline of primary care physicians and other providers needed to address existing health workforce shortages.

The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened the existing gaps in our nation's health care system and health disparities, especially in medically underserved and rural areas. These inequities can be addressed by increasing the diversity of primary care physicians. Studies show that patient satisfaction and health outcomes are improved when health providers and their patients have concordance in their racial, ethnic, and language backgrounds.^{1,2} Studies also show that students from backgrounds currently underrepresented in medicine are more likely to care for underserved populations in their careers, and more likely to choose primary care careers.³ The bill's inclusion of the forty percent in set-aside funding for racial and ethnic minorities and students from low-income urban and rural areas will address existing inequalities and reduce disparities and barriers, including student debt, for entry into the primary care profession.

Once again, thank you for introducing this important legislation. We look forward to working with you to move this legislation forward. For more information, please contact John Aguilar, Legislative Affairs Manager at jaguilar@aafp.org.

Sincerely,

Gary L. LeRoy, MD, FAAFP
Board Chair, American Academy of Family Physicians

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¹ Cooper LA, Powe NR. [Disparities in patient experiences, health care processes, and outcomes: the role of patient-provider racial, ethnic, and language concordance](#). The Commonwealth Fund. Accessed January 26, 2021.

² Poma PA. Race/ethnicity concordance between patients and physicians. *J Natl Med Assoc.* 2017;109(1):6-8.

³ Walker KO, Moreno G, Grumbach K. The association among specialty, race, ethnicity, and practice location among California physicians in diverse specialties. *J Natl Med Assoc.* 2012;104(1-2):46-52.