

October 22, 2010

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Hubert H. Humphrey Building  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Madam Secretary:

The undersigned National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Stakeholder associations support using the new NHSC Fund authorized under the Affordable Care Act (ACA, P.L. 111-148) to the greatest extent possible. The coalition represents the multiple health professionals, institutions, and underserved areas/populations that benefit from the program's scholarship and loan repayment awards.

The NHSC is widely recognized—both in Washington and in the underserved areas it helps—as a success on many fronts. It improves access to health care for the growing numbers of rural and urban underserved Americans, 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 socio economic backgrounds.

In spite of the NHSC's success, demand for health professionals across the country remains high. At a field strength of 4,760 in FY 2009, the NHSC fell more than 24,000 practitioners short of fulfilling the need for primary care, dental, and mental health practitioners in Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), as estimated by HRSA. While the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009" (P.L. 111-5) provided a temporary boost in annual awards, this increase in field strength must be sustained to help address the increasing health professionals workforce shortage and growing maldistribution.

With the unprecedented increase in access to health insurance made possible by ACA expected to exacerbate the shortage of health professionals, the full NHSC Fund is necessary to address manpower deficiencies by increasing new NHSC annual awards, opportunities, benefits, and ultimately the total NHSC field strength. This was a primary recommendation of the National Advisory Council's March 2007 report, "Priorities for Reauthorization and Legislative Updates" and a goal of health care reform.

The NHSC Stakeholders support ACA, which authorizes up to \$414 million for the NHSC in FY 2011 through discretionary appropriations and provides up to \$290 million through the new NHSC Fund at the discretion of the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS). Furthermore, we support report language accompanying the Senate's FY 2011 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations measure (S.Rept. 111-243) that anticipates HHS combining FY 2011 Labor-HHS discretionary funds together with the full \$290 million appropriated under ACA. Use of the NHSC Fund to the greatest extent possible will help recruit the health professionals necessary to care for our nation's underserved. Should you have any questions, please contact Matthew Shick at <mshick@aamc.org> or 202-862-6116.

Sincerely,

The National Health Service Corps Stakeholder associations

Cc: Mary Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N.  
Administrator, Health Resources and Services Administration  
Rebecca Spitzgo  
Director, National Health Service Corps

Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Academy of Physician Assistants  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine  
American College of Nurse-Midwives  
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians  
American College of Physicians  
American Dental Education Association  
American Hospital Association  
American Medical Association  
American Medical Student Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Osteopathic Association  
Academic Pediatric Association  
American Pediatric Society  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
Association of Academic Health Centers  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Community Health Nursing Educators  
Association of Departments of Family Medicine  
Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors  
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs  
Association of Professors of Medicine  
Association of Program Directors of Internal Medicine  
Clerkship Directors in Internal Medicine  
Committee of Interns and Residents/SEIU Healthcare  
National Association of Community Health Centers  
National Association of Counties  
National Association of Rural Health Clinics  
National Rural Health Association  
North American Primary Care Research Group  
Society for Pediatric Research  
Society of General Internal Medicine  
Society of Teachers of Family Medicine