



March 18, 2022

The Honorable Carole Johnson
Administrator
Health Resources Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Administrator Johnson:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), representing more than 127,600 family physicians and medical students across the country, I write to congratulate you on your confirmation as Administrator of the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA). The AAFP looks forward to working with you to strengthen the primary care workforce to improve health outcomes and achieve health equity for all Americans.

Investing in primary care is essential to HRSA's mission and to achieving our [shared goals](#). Primary care is the only health care component where an increased supply is associated with better population health and more equitable outcomes.ⁱ The AAFP has long supported the authorization and expansion of primary care training and loan repayment programs administered by HRSA. AAFP also recognizes the important role of Community Health Centers (CHCs) in increasing equitable access to high-quality, culturally competent primary care for low-income patients, those living in rural areas, and other underserved populations. In fact, primary care physicians make up nearly 90 percent of physicians working in CHCs and most of those physicians are family physicians.ⁱⁱ To ensure every American can get the comprehensive primary care they need, we look forward to partnering with you to strengthen training and loan repayment programs, support CHCs, and bolster maternal and child health programs including behavioral health.

Build a Robust and Diverse Primary Care Workforce

- Expand efforts to increase the primary care workforce and access to health care in underserved communities through the [Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education \(THCGME\) program](#).
- Address the primary care physician workforce shortages through [Title VII grants](#) to support primary care clinician training as well as curriculum and faculty development.
- Strengthen the family physician pipeline by continuing funding to the [National Health Service Corps Program](#), including the Loan Repayment Program and Scholarship Program.
- Ensure equitable financial support is available to primary care practices dealing with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic through the Provider Relief Fund and [streamline](#) the reporting requirements, so physicians can focus on patient care instead of administrative tasks.

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Protect and Strengthen Community Health Centers

- Strengthen and expand the Community Health Center program to improve equitable access to affordable, high-quality primary care services for people who are low-income, uninsured, or face other obstacles to getting health care.
- Work with Congress, CMS, and other agencies to ensure coverage and payment policies promote [continued access to telehealth services](#) for CHC patients after the end of the COVID-19 PHE.
- Support CHC participation in [alternative payment models](#) and collaborate with Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation to ensure alternative payment models are designed to increase participation and meet the unique needs of CHCs.
- Increase access to behavioral health services by prioritizing grants and technical assistance for CHCs providing [integrated behavioral health services](#).

Advance Access to Comprehensive Maternal and Child Health Care

- Reduce disparities in maternal health outcomes through HRSA grants programs, such as the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant Program, to [improve access](#) to comprehensive prenatal and postnatal care.
- Improve access to behavioral health care through the Pediatric Mental Health Care Access program, which trains primary care physicians on integrated behavioral health care through telehealth.
- Ensure the Maternity Care Health Professional Target Areas [acknowledge](#) family physicians' role in providing maternity care services, particularly in rural areas.

Again, congratulations on your confirmation as HRSA Administrator. We look forward to partnering with you and would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss our shared goals training a robust primary care workforce to meet the nation's growing and diverse population. To set up a meeting please contact Stephanie Quinn, Senior Vice President of Advocacy, Practice Advancement and Policy, at squinn@aafp.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ada D. Stewart, MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ada D. Stewart, MD, FAAFP
Board Chair, American Academy of Family Physicians

ⁱ McCauley L, Phillips RL, Meisnere M, Robinson SK. (2021). "Implementing High-Quality Primary Care: Rebuilding the Foundation of Health Care." National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Web.

ⁱⁱ Rosenblatt RA, Andrilla CHA, Curtin T, Hart LG. Shortages of medical personnel at community health centers: implications for planned expansion. JAMA 2006;295:1042-9.