

December 20, 2013

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Kingston
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Harkin and Kingston and Ranking Members Moran and DeLauro:

On behalf of the organizations representing family medicine, the Council of Academic Family Medicine which includes the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine, Association of Departments of Family Medicine, Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors, the North American Primary Care Research Group, and the American Academy of Family Physicians, we commend Congress on the passage of the *Bipartisan Budget Act* which will both address the flawed Medicare SGR to maintain health security for patients and offer some sequester relief and funding stability for important discretionary spending programs. As you confer to finalize fiscal year 2014 appropriations levels, we urge you invest adequately in our nation's primary care physician workforce and research programs.

Family medicine relies on the training grants made available by the Primary Care Training and Enhancement authorized by Title VII, Section 747 of the *Public Health Service Act* program to support the education and training of family physicians. In the face of primary care physician shortages, a failure to provide adequate funding for the Title VII, Section 747 would further strain health care delivery overall and prevent the development of educational innovations to train for inter-professional collaboration needed to make team-based care the norm. In addition, studies of the impact of the Title VII program found that physicians who work with the underserved in Community Health Centers and National Health Service Corps sites are more likely to have trained in Title VII-funded programs.

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) provides the critical evidence reviews needed to answer questions on the common acute, chronic, and comorbid conditions that primary care clinicians care for on a daily basis. AHRQ also promotes evidence-based patient safety practices. In addition, AHRQ supports research to improve health care quality, reduce costs, advance patient safety, decrease medical errors, and broaden access to

essential services. This research is vital to a robust health care system that delivers higher quality of care and better health while reducing the rising cost of care. Without this research, too little is known about appropriate care for "real" patients in primary care practices. The majority of research funding supports studies of one specific disease, organ system, or cellular or chemical process – none of which contribute to better primary care. Continuing practical primary care research requires sufficient funding for AHRQ, so it can help researchers address the fundamental problems confronting our health system today. We support a robust investment in the important primary care research performed by AHRQ.

We appreciate your continuing leadership in ensuring that our nation will have a health care delivery system with a solid foundation of primary care physicians. We urge you to provide the at least level funding for these important primary care training and research programs.

Sincerely,



Reid B. Blackwelder, MD, FAAFP
President
American Academy of Family Physicians



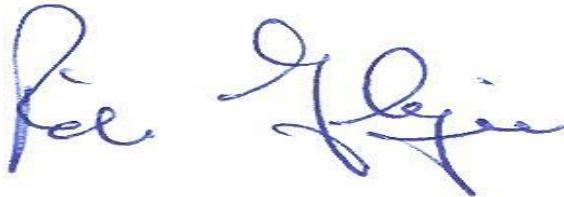
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