

April ##, 2011

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Mary Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N.
Administrator
Health Resources and Services Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Secretary Sebelius and Dr. Wakefield:

The undersigned organizations write to thank you for your longstanding commitment to enhance the health care workforce commensurate with the needs of the nation. As you prepare the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)'s fiscal year (FY) 2011 spending plan for implementing P.L. 112-10, we strongly encourage you to continue prioritizing the health care workforce by rejecting proposed cuts to programs within HRSA's Bureau of Health Professions (BHPPr).

As you know, the Bureau of Health Professions administers critical programs that help shape the workforce to respond to existing and emerging health care challenges. Through support for education and training of health professionals across disciplines, BHPPr programs cultivate the next generation of health care providers, including those that care for the most vulnerable, underserved populations. These programs fill the gaps in the private sector and complement efforts across the federal government; indeed, success of all HRSA objectives relies on the availability of well-prepared health professionals like those that graduate from BHPPr-supported programs.

Many of our organizations support multiple BHPPr initiatives, while others participate in specific programs. **We all share a common concern, however, that cuts to BHPPr will disrupt ongoing efforts to augment the health care workforce and impede patient access to quality health care.** Among such programs are:

- *Title VII health professions education and training programs*, which enhance the supply, diversity, and distribution of the health care workforce. With their emphasis on primary care and interdisciplinary education, for nearly 50 years the programs have been promoting innovative educational approaches for a range of health professionals, including primary care physicians; physician assistants; dentists; nurses; allied, public, and mental health providers; and other health professionals. They equip health professionals to adapt to new, improved models of care; facilitate training opportunities in rural and underserved settings and communities; support efforts to recruit and retain a diverse, culturally competent workforce; and strengthen the health professions pipeline, from K-12 to faculty development and across the full range of disciplines.
- *Title VIII nursing workforce development programs*, which provide the largest dedicated source of federal funding for nursing education. The high quality care provided by registered nurses and advanced practice registered nurses continues to be in demand, particularly as our health care system focuses on multi-disciplinary approaches to primary care. Moreover, nursing schools continue to face capacity barriers that prevent expanding enrollments needed to build the nursing pipeline. The Title VIII programs help meet these workforce needs by offering support for both education programs and individual students; bolstering nursing education from entry-level through graduate study; and providing financial aid incentives to practice in rural and underserved communities.
- *Children's Hospitals Graduate Medical Education (CHGME)*, which provides critical federal graduate medical education support for freestanding children's hospitals, similar to the support that other teaching hospitals receive through Medicare. The program provides essential support for the future primary care workforce for our nation's children and for pediatric specialty care, the greatest workforce shortage in children's health care. CHGME hospitals train 40 percent of all pediatricians (mostly in general pediatrics), 43 percent of pediatric specialists, and the majority of pediatric researchers. They also provide required pediatric rotations for residents in general internal medicine and family medicine.

- *Workforce Studies* under Title VII and the office of *Shortage Designation*, which serve to compile, synthesize, and report data on the supply and demand of health professionals. From a designation as a local health professions shortage area to studies of regional and national workforce trends, these essential federal functions arm policymakers and the communities they serve with reliable, comprehensive analyses of the health workforce landscape. These initiatives enable better-informed policy decisions for more than 30 programs at HRSA and throughout the federal government.

Each of these programs constitutes a relatively small portion of the federal budget, yet their impact is both far-reaching and deeply felt, particularly among the most underserved communities across the country. As a consequence, even seemingly moderate decreases in funding can devastate the ability of the programs to achieve their stated goals.

Health professionals are the foundation of our nation's health care system. While we recognize the challenging budget environment, we strongly urge you not to jeopardize patients' access to care through cuts that will destabilize BHP's efforts to bolster the health care workforce. Please prioritize funding for the Bureau of Health Professions in HRSA's FY 2011 spending plan.

Thank you again for your support, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to advance HRSA's mission and improve the health and well-being of the country.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
 American Academy of Physician Assistants
 American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
 American Association for Respiratory Care
 American Association of Colleges of Nursing
 American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
 American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
 American College of Physicians
 American Nurses Association
 American Psychological Association
 American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science
 Association of Academic Health Centers
 Association of American Medical Colleges
 Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
 Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
 Cedars-Sinai Health System
 Children's Hospital Boston
 Columbia University Medical Center
 Council on Social Work Education
 Mount Sinai School of Medicine
 National AHEC Organization
 National Association of Children's Hospitals
 National Association of Medical Minority Educators, Inc. (NAMME)
 National Coalition of Ethnic and Minority Nurse Associations
 Oncology Nursing Society
 Penn State College of Medicine
 Physician Assistant Education Association
 Society for Public Health Education
 Society of General Internal Medicine
 Stony Brook University Medical Center
 The Associated Medical Schools of New York (AMSNY)
 The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Thomas Jefferson University Hospital
UC Davis Health System
University of California, Irvine, School of Medicine
University of California, Riverside
University of Kansas Medical Center
University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center
University of Utah Health Sciences
University of Washington School of Medicine
University of Wisconsin System

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