

June 18, 2009

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

The undersigned group of concerned National Health Service Corps (NHSC) stakeholder associations writes in support of increased appropriations for the NHSC in FY 2010. The coalition represents the multiple health professions, 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 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 backgrounds.

However, in the past five years NHSC appropriations have been cut by over \$47 million, a 27 percent reduction from the \$171 million in FY 2003 that was already insufficient to meet the nation's needs. As a result, the NHSC has reduced the number of new annual scholarship and loan repayment awards by over 30 percent during that period (from 1,353 awards in FY 2003 to 943 in FY 2008).

By its own calculation, the NHSC falls more than 30,000 short of a field strength that would begin to meet the needs of the nation's underserved areas. While the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009" (P.L. 111-5) provides an important boost over the next two years, the NHSC estimates it will result in approximately 3,500 additional NHSC practitioners. Furthermore, these additional practitioners will be lost in future years if the NHSC is unable to fund award continuations or maintain the same level of new annual awards.

As the nation faces serious health professions shortages, additional funding is necessary to address this deficiency by increasing new NHSC annual awards and the total NHSC field strength. This was the primary recommendation National Advisory Council on the National Health Service Corps' March 2007 report, "Priorities for Reauthorization and Legislative Updates."

For FY 2010, the NHSC stakeholders recommend a combined appropriation of \$235 million for the NHSC, \$66 million more than the President's Budget. This figure represents the amount authorized under the "Health Care Safety Net Act of 2008" (P.L. 110-355) for NHSC Recruitment (\$156,235,150) with a proportionate increase in the NHSC Field appropriation. Moreover, the FY 2010 budget resolution "assumes significant increases" for the NHSC. 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

Administrators of Internal Medicine
Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
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 Association
American Dental Education Association
American Dental Hygienists' Association
American Medical Association
American Medical Student Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association
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 Professors of Medicine
Association of Program Directors of Internal Medicine
Association of Specialty Professors
Association of State and Territorial Directors of Nursing
Clerkship Directors in Internal Medicine
Committee of Interns and Residents/SEIU Healthcare
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Rural Health Association
North American Primary Care Research Group
Society of General Internal Medicine
Society of Teachers of Family Medicine