

July 12, 2023

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chair
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions (HELP)
828 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions (HELP)
828 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy:

We, the undersigned organizations, represent a cross section of vital clinician and healthcare workforce stakeholders committed to caring for underserved communities. We are dedicated to strengthening the healthcare workforce and advancing health equity to support those most in need, particularly those who reside in medically underserved and health professional shortage areas (HPSAs). We are contacting you to express our grave concern over the fast-approaching end of the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) mandatory funding set to expire at the end of this fiscal year, September 30th, 2023. The urgent need to extend and bolster funding for the NHSC cannot be overstated as the nation continues to reel from severe clinician and healthcare workforce shortages, particularly in rural and underserved communities that can least afford further strain. The NHSC has a fifty-year legacy of success in addressing workforce shortages in these areas of need and for this reason we implore you to take swift action as leaders of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee to reauthorize and further invest in the NHSC. In particular, we want to call your attention to the *Restoring America's Health Care Workforce and Readiness Act*, S. 862 being led by Senators Durbin and Rubio.

This group of stakeholders applauds the leadership and vision of Senators Durbin and Rubio in introducing this bipartisan legislation to support critical funding for the NHSC, a program that enables over 20,000 clinicians to provide primary care and other services to over 21 million people in underserved rural and urban communities across the U.S. Since 1972, the NHSC has built healthier communities by placing more than 69,500 healthcare providers in underserved rural and urban areas of nearly every U.S. state and territory. More than 158 million people reside in primary care HPSAs, and the NHSC aims to provide care for these populations by offering scholarships and loan repayments to physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, dentists, behavioral health, and other providers who agree to practice in HPSAs served by health centers, rural health clinics, Indian Health Service sites, and other facilities.

Unfortunately, overall funding for the Corps has decreased by nearly \$220 million in FY23 when compared to the previous year. As our country faces a massive health workforce shortage, Congress must do everything possible to sustain the critical growth in the Corps. Furthermore, data analysis on the percentage of funded eligible NHSC applicants from FY20 to FY22 suggests that the NHSC would need \$965.6 million in FY24 to address and keep pace with the increasing need and projected clinician workforce shortages. With that said, this legislation represents the minimum funding needed to keep the NHSC intact without taking significant steps backward.

The *Restoring America's Health Care Workforce and Readiness Act* would extend funding for the NHSC through Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26). The bill charts funding for the NHSC for the next

three years, averting the devastating funding cliff the NHSC faces at the end of FY23 on September 30th. More specifically, this bill would double mandatory funding from \$310 million up to \$625 million in FY24, then increase up to \$675 million in FY25 and to \$825 million in FY26. These bipartisan funding levels are credible and necessary investments to restore the purchasing power of the NHSC to prior year levels, and meet the dire need in our communities. We urge you and esteemed members of the HELP Committee to unite behind the *Restoring America's Health Care Workforce and Readiness Act*, a key bipartisan effort to continue funding the Corps to bring care within reach for those who need it most.

Thank you for your leadership on the committee and for allowing this group of stakeholders to share its support for the *Restoring America's Health Care Workforce and Readiness Act*. If you or your staff would like to discuss in further detail how preserving and strengthening NHSC's critical funding will alleviate workforce shortages, please contact Amanda Pears Kelly at apearskelly@clinicians.org

Sincerely,

Advocates for Community Health
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Hospital Association
Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Association of Clinicians for the Underserved (ACU)
Capital Link
Health Choice Network
National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC)
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Medical Association
OCHIN
PA Education Association
Alabama Primary Health Care Association
Alameda Health Consortium
Alaska Primary Care Association
Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers
Association for Utah Community Health
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Bi-State Primary Care Association
California Primary Care Association
CHAD
Colorado Community Health Network
Community Care Network of Kansas
Community Health Center Association of Connecticut
Community Health Center Association of Mississippi
Community Health Care Association of New York State
Community Health & Wellness Partners

District of Columbia Primary Care Association
Family Healthcare of Hagerstown
Florida Association of Community Health Centers
Georgia Primary Care Association
Health Center Association of Nebraska
Idaho Community Health Center Association
Illinois Primary Health Care Association
Iowa Primary Care Association
Kentucky Primary Care Association
Lamoille Health Partners
Maine Primary Care Association
Maryland Community Health System
Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers
Michigan Primary Care Association
Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers
Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers
Missouri Primary Care Association
Montana Primary Care Association
Nevada Primary Care Association
New Jersey Primary Care Association
North Carolina Community Health Center Association
Northwest Regional Primary Care Association
OACHC
Oklahoma Primary Care Association
Oregon Primary Care Association
Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers
Rhode Island Health Center Association
South Carolina Primary Health Care Association
Virginia Community Healthcare Association
Washington Association for Community Health
West Virginia Primary Care Association
Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association
Tennessee Primary Care Association
Texas Association of Community Health Centers