

November 29, 2012

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Reid, Speaker Boehner, Leader McConnell and Leader Pelosi:

The undersigned groups agree that sequestration would be devastating to health programs, potentially decreasing the country's supply of health professionals and limiting patient access to care at a time of growing demand. As Congress considers a balanced approach to deficit reduction to replace the sequester, we urge you to fund the National Health Care Workforce Commission at \$3 million; the Commission's work will inform difficult policy decisions to ensure that resources are channeled optimally, and are not redirected arbitrarily from programs that protect patients' access to care.

As the United States grapples with a deficit of physicians and other health professionals, the country lacks a comprehensive strategy to address these critical shortages. The National Health Care Workforce Commission was designed as an independent body to study and advise policymakers on a broad range of workforce-related topics, including national workforce priorities and goals, current and projected workforce supply, and assessments of current and needed education and training activities to meet the demand for health care workers. Moreover, the Commission was tasked with analyzing and making recommendations to eliminate barriers surrounding disciplines and professions where demand is not being met, such as shortages of primary care practitioners; pediatric and adult specialists; and mental, dental, and public health professionals. Without an explicit appropriation, the Commission has not been able to identify obstacles that may create and exacerbate workforce shortages and improve coordination on the federal, state and local levels. Yet, in the coming weeks, policy decisions with the potential to profoundly affect the nation's workforce capacity may be enacted without the benefit of the Commission's expertise.

This entity has become more critical as more Americans have insurance coverage and the population ages, requiring greater access to care. Guidance from this Commission will also ensure that the training funds are being spent in areas where they can have the greatest impact. Every year that goes by without funding for the Commission means one year longer without its analyses on the scope of and recommendations on how to address the crisis.

While the undersigned organizations are aware of the dire fiscal situation this country faces and that difficult choices must be made to address it, it is critical to preserve the programs that will help this country regain fiscal stability. Across-the-board cuts as mandated by the Budget Control Act of 2011 will not achieve this. We urge you to find an alternative that will ensure federal dollars are spent to best address the country's needs. The National Health Care Workforce Commission will provide Congress with a necessary and comprehensive analysis of workforce issues across disciplines so lawmakers can appropriately assess the difficult choices related to health spending, rather than diverting resources indiscriminately from programs most in need, like those for physician and other health professional training.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical matter.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Academy of Physician Assistants

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy

American College of Clinical Pharmacy

American College of Nurse Practitioners

American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians

American College of Osteopathic Internists

American College of Physicians

American Medical Student Association

American Organization of Nurse Executives

American Osteopathic Association

American Podiatric Medical Association

Association for Prevention Teaching and Research

Association of Academic Health Centers

Association of American Medical Colleges

Association of Chiropractic Colleges

Association of Departments of Family Medicine

Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors

Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry

Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions

Association of University Programs in Health Administration

National AHEC Organization

National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations

National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems

National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties

North American Primary Care Research Group

Physician Assistant Education Association

Society of Teachers of Family Medicine