

February 5, 2021

The Honorable Frank Pallone
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Richard Burr
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Murray and Burr and Representatives Pallone and McMorris Rodgers:

On behalf of the Teaching Health Centers (THCs), physicians, and medical students represented by our organizations, we are writing to urge you to include additional appropriations for the Teaching Health Centers Graduate Medical Education program in the COVID-19 budget reconciliation legislation that Congress and the Administration are developing.

We were very grateful that Congress recently reauthorized this program for three years, which will help provide some stability for the 59 medical training programs at the THCs. Particularly in view of the current COVID crisis, there is a continued need to augment THC resources, as noted below.

We are mindful of the fact that Congress has just committed new funding for THCGME, but we respectfully note that the flat funding level for FY2021-2023 does not solve some of the financial challenges the THCs were facing even before the pandemic and it does not permit additional expansion to underserved areas that face severe shortages of primary care physicians. While our first priority is for Congress to reauthorize THCGME permanently or for a period as long as 10 years, with built in funding increases and expansion, we understand if that is difficult to obtain in the upcoming budget reconciliation bill.

Accordingly, we believe that additional funding in the reconciliation bill would help nonprofit THCs meet economic challenges that COVID has caused for them and would address the significant need to increase the Per Resident Allocation by \$10,000/year from the level first set in 2011. We are hopeful that Congress will consider funding robust expansion by permitting HHS to add new centers/programs and new residency slots at existing THCs, and to provide development grants to those new centers. The pandemic has demonstrated what can happen when underserved urban and rural areas lack sufficient primary care physicians and access to care, especially among minoritized populations. The THCGME program is a near term and longer term solution, since THC residents have been treating COVID patients and have helped shoulder the burden of their fellow physicians by treating non-COVID patients as well. We further believe Congress should incorporate a proposal from Chairman Pallone's LIFT America Act to provide for the first-ever THC capital grants to facilitate renovation and modernization tied to resident training, which are especially necessary to respond to increased costs associated with COVID and the need to expand physical access to primary care training in a COVID environment.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We look forward to working with you in the coming weeks and the remainder of the 117th Congress.

Sincerely,

American Association of Teaching Health Centers
National Association of Community Health Centers
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
Council of Academic Family Medicine
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Osteopathic Association
Society of General Internal Medicine