

June 10, 2021

The Honorable Frank Pallone
U.S. House of Representatives
2107 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Pallone and Senator Murray:

On behalf of our physician and medical student members, the American Medical Association (AMA) is writing to voice our support for the Doctors of Community Act or the “DOC Act.” This legislation would permanently authorize the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program. As such, this legislation is vitally important in ensuring that patients in underserved areas continue to have access to the care that they need.

The THCGME program, in part, covers expenses for qualified teaching health centers for expansion, establishment, and maintenance of filled positions at existing approved graduate medical residency training programs. Most Teaching Health Centers are in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), Rural Health Clinics, and tribal health centers and all the qualified teaching health centers prioritize care for high-need communities and vulnerable people.¹

Moreover, this program provides essential training to residents in high need specialties including Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Internal Pediatric Medicine, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Psychiatry, and Geriatrics. In academic year 2020-2021, this program trained 769 residents in 60 primary care residency programs, across 25 states.² Additionally, since 2011, the program has supported the training of over 1,148 new primary care physicians and dentists.³ With a projected shortage of 139,000 physicians by 2033 and a projected primary care physician shortage of between 21,400 and 55,200, the continuation of this program is crucial.⁴ Considering the current and projected physician shortage, and the increased demands that have been placed on physicians during the pandemic, additional support for this program with a proven track record of success in our urban and rural areas of the country is desperately needed.

As the nation faces a pandemic and physician shortages, sustained, long-term investments in workforce programs are necessary to help care for our nation’s most vulnerable populations. This legislation will help to sustain this important program which has helped to maintain the current physician workforce during the pandemic and help preserve a robust pipeline of providers for underserved communities.

¹ <https://bhwh.hrsa.gov/funding/apply-grant/teaching-health-center-graduate-medical-education>.

² *Id.*

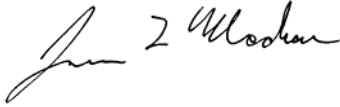
³ *Id.*

⁴ AAMC (2020, June) The Complexities of Supply and Demand: Projections from 2018 to 2033. Retrieved from AAMC: <https://www.aamc.org/system/files/2020-06/stratcomm-aamc-physician-workforce-projections-june2020.pdf>.

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The AMA appreciates your leadership on this important issue, and we look forward to working with you to advance this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim L Madara". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD